



**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. 63B – 1:30 p.m., Thursday, May 28, 2026**

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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 28, 2026

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

And just before we begin, I want to send a huge thank-you out to all the staff of the Assembly. The day that never seemed to end required a lot of effort on their part to make sure that the wheels kept working, that democracy could carry on.

So I think we should give them all a big round of applause.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**The Speaker:** And now on to routine proceedings.

Introduction of bills?

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs Eighth Report

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

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**The Speaker:** Dispense.

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

#### Meetings

*Your Committee met in camera on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:*

- November 20, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. (3<sup>rd</sup> Session – 43<sup>rd</sup> Legislature)
- May 27, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. (3<sup>rd</sup> Session – 43<sup>rd</sup> Legislature)

#### Matters under Consideration

- The hiring process for the Chief Electoral Officer

#### Committee Membership

*Committee Membership for the November 20, 2025 meeting:*

- Mr. BLASHKO
- MLA CORBETT
- Mr. GUENTER
- MLA LOISELLE
- Mr. OXENHAM
- Mrs. ROBBINS

*Your Committee elected MLA LOISELLE as the Chairperson.*

*Your Committee elected Mr. OXENHAM as the Vice-Chairperson.*

*Committee Membership for the May 27, 2026 meeting:*

- MLA BEREZA
- MLA CORBETT
- Mr. EWASKO
- Mr. OXENHAM
- Hon. Min. SCHMIDT
- Hon. Mr. WIEBE

*Your Committee elected Mr. OXENHAM as the Chairperson.*

*Your Committee elected MLA CORBETT as the Vice-Chairperson.*

#### Motions

*Your Committee agreed to the following motion at the November 20, 2025 meeting:*

- THAT a sub-committee of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs be struck to manage the process of hiring the Chief Electoral Officer, under the terms and conditions as follows:

*(a) the sub-committee consist of four Government Members, two Official Opposition Members and one Independent Liberal Member;*

*(b) the sub-committee have the authority to call its own meetings, the ability to meet in camera, and be able to undertake duties it deems necessary in order to fulfil its responsibilities in the hiring process;*

(c) the sub-committee may only report back to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs with a recommendation that has been agreed to by all members; and

(d) the Clerks as well as the Legislative Assembly Administration staff be authorized to attend all meetings of the sub-committee.

Your Committee agreed to the following motions at the May 27, 2026, meeting:

- THAT the report and recommendations of the Sub-Committee be received.
- THAT the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs recommends to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba that Josh Watt be appointed as the Chief Electoral Officer.

### **REPORT FROM THE SUB-COMMITTEE**

Your Sub-Committee presents the following as its First Report.

#### **Meetings**

Your Sub-Committee met on the following occasions:

- January 26, 2026, at 4:00 p.m.
- May 12, 2026, at 12:00 p.m.
- May 25, 2026, at 12:00 p.m.

The January 26, 2026, meeting was held in camera in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.

The May 12, 2026, meeting was held in camera in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

The May 25, 2026, meeting was held in camera in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

#### **Matters under Consideration**

- The hiring process for the Chief Electoral Officer

#### **Sub-Committee Membership**

Sub-Committee Membership for the January 26, 2026 meeting:

- MLA CORBETT (Chairperson)
- Mr. EWASKO
- Mrs. HIEBERT
- Mr. OXENHAM (Vice-Chairperson)
- Hon. Min. SCHMIDT
- Hon. Mr. WIEBE

Your Sub-Committee elected MLA CORBETT as the Chairperson.

Your Sub-Committee elected Mr. OXENHAM as the Vice-Chairperson.

Sub-Committee Membership for the May 12, 2026 meeting:

- MLA CORBETT (Chairperson)
- Mr. EWASKO
- Mr. OXENHAM (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mrs. ROBBINS
- Hon. Min. SCHMIDT
- Hon. Mr. WIEBE

Sub-Committee Membership for the May 25, 2026 meeting:

- Mr. BEREZA
- MLA CORBETT (Chairperson)
- Mr. EWASKO
- Mr. OXENHAM (Vice-Chairperson)
- Hon. Min. SCHMIDT
- Hon. Mr. WIEBE

#### **Staff present for all Sub-Committee meetings**

- Carrie Perumal, Director of Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services
- Melanie Ching, Clerk Assistant/Clerk of Committees

#### **Agreements by the Sub-Committee**

Your Sub-Committee reached the following agreements during the meeting on January 26, 2026:

- Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services will draft all paperwork involved in the hiring process of a Chief Electoral Officer, including the Advertising Plan, Selection Criteria, Paper Screening Criteria, and Advertisement, for the Sub-Committee's consideration and review.
- Following the closure of the advertisement, Human Resource Services will conduct the paper screening of applications received and provide the Sub-Committee a list of all qualified candidates for review in advance of its next meeting.
- The Sub-Committee will then meet to review the list of qualified candidates and determine which applicant(s) will be interviewed.
- To adopt the following Terms of Reference:

*Legislative Assembly of Manitoba*

*Terms of Reference for Hiring of Independent Officers of the Assembly*

*January 26, 2026*

**Purpose:**

On November 20, 2025, the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs passed a motion to strike a Sub-Committee to manage the process of hiring a new Chief Electoral Officer. The Sub-Committee, consisting of four Government Members, two Official Opposition Members and one Independent Liberal Member, has the authority to call its own meetings, the ability to meet in camera, and be able to undertake duties it deems necessary in order to fulfil its responsibilities in the hiring process. The Sub-Committee must report back to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs with a recommendation that has been agreed to by all Members.

The Sub-Committee will be assisted in their duties by the staff from the Committees Branch and the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services who are authorized to attend all meetings of the Sub-Committee.

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

1. The Sub-Committee assigns the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services to deal with all the logistics and paperwork involved with the hiring process of the Chief Electoral Officer.
2. The Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services will:
  - (a) devise a hiring process which includes an advertising plan, a paper screening process, an interview process and a selection process;
  - (b) draft an advertisement, paper screening criteria and selection criteria;
  - (c) print the advertisement as set out in the advertising plan;
  - (d) conduct the paper screening of applications received;
  - (e) report to the Sub-Committee all qualified candidates for review and selection to interview;
  - (f) conduct interviews on candidates selected by the Sub-Committee;

(g) report to the Sub-Committee, the interview rating results on the candidates selected by the Sub-Committee; and

(h) conduct reference checks on candidate(s) and report to the Sub-Committee any issues or concerns identified.

3. The Sub-Committee Members will individually have the ability to view the list of qualified candidates along with their background paperwork confidentially at the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services Office prior to the Sub-Committee's review.
4. The Sub-Committee will review the list of qualified candidates and select which applicant(s) will be interviewed by the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services.
5. Each Member of the Sub-Committee shall be entitled to observe the interviews while having participation in the scoring process.
6. The Sub-Committee will review the interview rating results and, pending successful reference checks, determine the candidate to be recommended for the position of Chief Electoral Officer.
7. The Sub-Committee must provide a report to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs that includes a recommendation for the Chief Electoral Officer.

Your Sub-Committee reached the following agreements during the meeting on May 12, 2026:

- To interview seven candidates selected for review by Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services.
- To adopt the interview questions prepared by Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services.

Your Sub-Committee reached the following agreements during the meeting on May 25, 2026:

- Pending successful reference checks, the Sub-Committee agreed to recommend to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs that Josh Watt be appointed as the Chief Electoral Officer.
- In the event that the chosen candidate declines the offer or the reference checks are unsuccessful, the Sub-Committee agreed to meet again to discuss further options.

**Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services Activities:**

*As agreed to by the Sub-Committee on January 26, 2026, Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services was tasked with all the logistics and paperwork involved with the hiring process of the Chief Electoral Officer.*

*On May 12, 2026, Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services reported to the Sub-Committee a list of seven qualified candidates.*

*On May 19, 2026, Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services was notified that one of the candidates who met the selection criteria to a certain degree and was selected by the Sub-Committee for interview had withdrawn from the competition.*

*On May 20, 2026, Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services advised that one of the candidates who met the selection criteria to a certain degree and was selected by the Sub-Committee for interview had not responded to the invitation for interview.*

*The Sub-Committee considered applications for the position of Chief Electoral Officer as follows:*

- *57 applications were received for the position.*
- *Five individuals were interviewed for the position on May 19 and May 20, 2026.*

*On May 25, 2026, Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services reported to the Sub-Committee the interview rating results of the candidate interviewed.*

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**The Speaker:** Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements? Members' statements?

No members' statements?

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

**River Park South Community Association**

**MLA Billie Cross (Seine River):** Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize the River Park South Community Association, a dedicated group of volunteers who work hard to bring our community together.

The association was formed in 2022 by a small group of residents who wanted to build a vibrant, inclusive and supportive neighbourhood. Since then, they have worked hard to create opportunities for

residents to connect and become part of community life.

The organization is led by a volunteer board of directors who meet regularly to guide their work and make sure the association continues to grow and support residents. Their focus is on building a sense of belonging and improving the quality of life for folks in River Park South.

Over the past few years, they've organized a wide range of events, from Canada Day celebrations to craft sales, giving folks a chance to come together, support local businesses and enjoy everything our community has to offer.

As we head into spring and summer, there's a lot to look forward to. On June 6, they are planning to host the River Park South community garage sale, a great chance to explore our community and connect with neighbours; and in July they will host their annual Canada Day celebrations.

These events, and all the work that happens behind the scenes, would not be possible without the dedication of the board. I want to thank Saumik Gupta, Oluwatoyin George, Courtney Welch, Tara Boissoneault, Indrima Munshi and Audra Martin for everything that they do.

Your work has helped make River Park South a place where residents feel supported and proud to live.

I ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing the River Park South Community Association, who joins us today, and thank them for all that they do.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Aayushi Sharma**

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** I rise today to recognize Aayushi Sharma, a grade 12 student at Rossburn Collegiate, who has been named the 2026 Loran Scholar, one of the most prestigious undergraduate honours in Canada.

The Loran Award is not simply about academic achievement; it's about character, courage, service and a deep commitment to making the world better.

A first-generation immigrant who arrived in Rossburn just four years ago, she quickly became a leader in her school and her community. As student council president, she organized events and led a food drive for the local food bank. She volunteered at the Rossburn Personal Care Home, building meaningful relationships with residents who, in many ways, became like family.

She has been recognized with the Park West School Division Student Citizenship award and has championed student voices, ensuring young people have a seat at the table.

This fall, Aayushi will attend the University of Calgary to study biological sciences with the goal of improving health care in rural and underserved communities.

Her story is a reminder that leadership is not defined by where you come from, but by how you show up.

Rosburn didn't just produce a Loran Scholar, it helped shape exactly the kind of person this country needs.

I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Aayushi, who is watching virtually today.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

#### **St. James Assiniboia Student Wheel Challenge**

**Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism):** I rise today to recognize the incredible spirit of wellness and community shown by the students and families participating in the St. James-Assiniboia School Division's sixth annual Wheel Challenge.

By engaging with a creative bingo challenge card, students are invited to turn daily movement on any form of wheels into a joyful game, win a—with a chance to win a \$500 shopping spree from a local retailer, White Pine Bicycle Company.

For many young people, the path to building lifelong healthy habits can feel secondary to the demands of a busy school day. It's in these moments that practical opportunities to be active can make a meaningful difference in the lives of our youth.

What began in 2021 during the height of the pandemic has grown into a vital community initiative shaped by a collective desire to get moving. From May 19 to June 8, hundreds of students across Assiniboia are taking their bicycles, rollerblades, scooters and wheelchairs to embrace acting-active living.

Honourable Speaker, the impact of this program stretches far beyond physical activity. Engaging these outdoor activities allows children to step away from screens and connect with their surroundings, and this type of intentional focus on movement often has the added advantage of improving mental well-being, resilience and personal confidence in our children.

Furthermore, by embracing active transportation, these young people are reducing their carbon footprint and building a sustainable culture across Assiniboia.

While our children eagerly complete their bingo cards, they do so with the understanding that the true reward is the quiet resilience, lifelong wellness and care for their environment they are building together with every single turn of their wheels.

Please join me in congratulating these remarkable students and the dedicated organizers of the Wheel Challenge for their commitment to a healthier, greener future.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

#### **Dr. Gabriel Lemoine**

**MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** Chers collègues et invités, [*Esteemed colleagues and guests,*] esteemed colleagues and guests, it is my honour today to recognize the exceptional merits of an outstanding member of the Dawson Trail constituency, Dr. Gabriel Lemoine.

#### ***French spoken***

J'ai l'honneur et plaisir aujourd'hui de 'reconntre' les mérites exceptionnels de Dr Lemoine.

#### ***Translation***

*It is my honour and pleasure today to recognize Dr. Lemoine's exceptional achievements.*

#### ***English***

Dr. Gabriel Lemoine has served our community as a family physician and anesthesiologist for a remarkable 49 years, sharing his time between the Seine medical clinic and supporting surgeries at both the Ste. Anne and Steinbach hospital.

In his career spanning generations, he has helped heal and comfort countless patients, both young, old, in their time of need.

#### ***French spoken***

Le Dr Lemoine a fait preuve d'un engagement remarquable aux services de la santé de la 'rég' du Sud-Est.

#### ***Translation***

*Dr. Lemoine has demonstrated a remarkable commitment to health-care services in the southeast region.*

\* (13:40)

**English**

He has also served as a volunteer on various boards, including the Villa Youville and Knights of Columbus.

Dr. Gabriel Lemoine's dedication has earned the respect of colleagues and the admiration of the community. Indeed, his lasting contributions were recognized at a sold-out gala hosted by his peers, and a surgical suite at the Ste. Anne Hospital has been named in his honour.

**French spoken**

Passionné et dévoué, le Dr Gabriel Lemoine laisse un legs positif et durable à la communauté.

Mesdames et messieurs, je vous prie de vous – de me joindre à – de joindre à moi pour souligner l'humanité et la 'bonivance' de Dr Lemoine.

**Translation**

*Passionate and dedicated, Dr. Gabriel Lemoine leaves behind a positive and lasting legacy for the community.*

*Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in honouring Dr. Lemoine's humanity and kindness.*

**English**

Please join me in recognizing Dr. Lemoine for his community–commitment and lasting contributions to our community. He joins us in the gallery today.

**David Ingram**

**MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips):** Honourable Speaker, I rise to recognize a leader in my community as he prepares for his well-earned retirement from the classroom. David Ingram has been an educator since 1989, spending more than 36 years shaping the lives of students across our province.

Over the course of his career, he taught grades 1 through 8, including five years in French immersion, before moving into school leadership. After beginning his career in The Maples, David eventually made his way to West St. Paul School. There he served as the vice-principal for three years before becoming principal at Forest Park School for three and a half years. He then returned to West St. Paul School where he proudly served as a principal for the last seven and a half years.

And while many folks would be ready to fully step away after 36 years of service, not David. David answered the call when his school community needed

him once again. After semi-retiring last June, he returned to help support staff and students and has now agreed to continue serving as principal through December. That kind of dedication says a great deal about the person David is. For 35 years, West St. Paul has been David's home. He has coached baseball and hockey and has always been someone who shows up for young people and families in the community he cares so deeply about.

Through his leadership and kindness, he has made a lasting difference in the lives of many families in McPhillips.

I ask all my colleagues to join me in congratulating David Ingram, who is joined by his wife Sheri today, on an outstanding career and wishing him the very well—the very best in a well-deserved retirement.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

Before we move on any further, I have a couple of things to announce.

**Introduction of Guests**

**The Speaker:** We have joining us in the public gallery grade 4 students from Meadows West School, and they are here today as guests of the honourable First Minister, and they're located in the Tyndall Park constituency.

So we welcome you here today.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** And now it is the season of goodbyes. We are—three pages who are working their last shift here today.

First, we have Anna Kersey. She'll be graduating from St. John's-Ravenscourt School this June. She will be continuing her studies at the University of Ottawa in the joint honours program for political science and public administration. Following her undergraduate degree, she plans to further her education in law school with the long-term goal of pursuing politics or becoming a lawyer.

With deep interests and passion for politics, working as a page has helped her understanding of the legislative process, the importance of representing people and the impact of public service. Anna is very grateful for getting to observe the dedicated and passionate legislators here today and extends her gratitude to everyone at the Legislature she has met and learned from.

Anna would also like to acknowledge her mom, Linda, who helped support her in getting this role and who raised her to have skills, compassion, ambition, that have given her the confidence to pursue opportunities like this.

Each shift brought something new and valuable. As this experience comes to an end, Anna feels extremely fulfilled and appreciative for this past year. Anna will cherish this experience and use it to guide her in Ottawa and throughout her future.

In the gallery is Anna's mother, Linda Sander, and sister, May Kersey. And we welcome you here.

And also, Gurreet Kaur Khela is finishing grade 11 this June from the University of Winnipeg Collegiate. She will finish her grade 12 year of high school in May 2027. Following high school, Gurreet wishes to go to the Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba in hopes of pursuing law school afterwards.

As she plans her future aspirations, she will forever be grateful for the experience she obtained through paging at the Legislature that helped her become a more responsible and educated person. She claims that she enjoyed working in this professional and diverse environment with many thoughts and views.

Having learned many new things, Gurreet would like to thank everyone who helped her throughout her paging career this year. She would especially like to thank those who kindly and patiently taught her how to fulfill her duties. Gurreet hopes that she gets a chance to work in the Manitoba Legislature again so that she could expand her knowledge and experience even further. She hopes to see you all again.

In the gallery are family members, mother, Narinderjit Kaur Khela and brother Guril [*phonetic*] Singh Khela, and we welcome you here today.

And thirdly, we have Sukhmeet Kaur Ghatrorhe. She is a grade 11 student at Grant Park High School and is set to graduate in 2027.

She intends to pursue post-secondary studies in political science and economics with a strong passion for public service governance.

As she reflects on her journey as page, she recalls her connection to the Manitoba Legislature began long before she became a page. Growing up, she would attend events at the Legislative grounds, including Sikh Nagar Kirtan. She remembers taking photos as a little kid in front of the same

Chamber door she now walks through with the Speaker's parade, never imagining that one day she would be stepping through them as a page herself.

As a page, Sukhmeet's experience has given her a deeper understanding of what happens behind those closed doors. She's come to understand that the Legislature is not only a historic building, but a place where decisions are shaped through dialogue, responsibility and collaboration. Being in this environment has strengthened her passion for public service and her belief in the importance of democracy.

Outside of her legislative duties, Sukhmeet is involved with the Youth Parliament of Manitoba and the Royal Canadian Air Cadets. She is a member of the Manitoba Student Advisory Council, Winnipeg Model United Nations Assembly and the Manitoba Envirothon, where she continues to engage in leadership discussions and civic-focused work across both school and community settings.

Sukhmeet would like to share an excerpt from her speech this—at this past Youth Parliament session. Quote: It is truly an honour to stand in this Chamber, a place that represents public trust and responsibility and the power of ideas. This room carries history. Decisions made in spaces like this shape the lives far beyond their walls, and being entrusted to speak here is not just symbolic, it is meaningful. End quote.

Furthermore, Sukhmeet has deeply valued being a part of the day-to-day work of the Assembly and to see first-hand the work that takes place in this Chamber. It has been a substantial experience that she will always carry forward as she continues her studies and work involvement—and future involvement. She says thank you for welcoming her into this environment. Although she is sad to see this year come to an end so quickly, Sukhmeet looks forward to her future and what lies ahead, and making the most of her final year of high school.

She hopes to see you all again very soon.

\* (13:50)

In the gallery today are her family members, father Baljinder Singh Ghatrorhe, mother Daljeet Kaur Ghatrorhe and sister Sukhdeep Kaur Ghatrorhe. And we welcome you all here today as well.

And we thank each and every one of you for your service to the Assembly and to the members.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** And it is now time for oral questions.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Budget Affordability Measures Concern Regarding Extent of Impact

**Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I would also like to take a second to thank the staff, the clerks, the pages and everyone for their hard work in the Manitoba Legislature.

Now, this NDP government has plenty to say, attacking us and heckling us off the record. But when the cameras are on for 30 hours straight, they have nothing to say. Not a single member from this Kinew government stood up to defend their own terrible budget bill. Why?

Because they're hearing the same things that we are hearing from Manitobans, and that is that this NDP budget does not go far enough: \$50 on—renters is not affordability when this NDP government increases your rent by hundreds of dollars; \$100 a year for homeowners tax credit is not enough when they've raised it by hundreds, if not thousands of dollars. A couple cents off a Slurpee is just a joke by this Premier.

Why is the Premier ignoring Manitobans who are telling him they need more help to make life more affordable and his junk food tax isn't cutting it?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Honourable Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Anna, Gurreet and Sukhmeet for the amazing job that they've all done here in the Manitoba Legislature. I think we all know that the future is very bright in this province and, hopefully, they only take the positive things out of their time here and none of the negative.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to thank all of the clerks and sergeant of arms and their staff as well as yourself and the deputy Speakers for the extended effort you've put forward this week. Not always easy, but certainly you carried yourself with grace and aplomb.

Now, when it comes to the member's question, actions speak louder than words, and so we're taking the action of taking all tax off of food and drinks at the grocery stores, of making transit free for young people in Manitoba, investing in health care and investing in education. They've got words. We've got actions. We know—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

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

### PST Exemption on Prepared Foods Restaurants Canada Consultation

**Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):** The Premier just isn't listening to Manitobans when they tell him that pennies off of Twinkies and Slurpees isn't going to make their life more affordable. The Premier promised he would keep income tax exemptions indexed to inflation. The Premier gave his word, and now Manitobans can see the Premier's word means absolutely nothing. He broke that promise.

The Kinew government claims to support families while raising their income property taxes by hundreds and thousands of dollars. The Premier talks about a one Manitoba, but yet divides them with unions and non-unions and against local restaurants, Honourable Speaker. The Premier cares so little about you, he refuses to listen to you and now he refuses to listen to Restaurants Canada, an association made up of more than 40,000 Manitobans, \$4 billion into Manitoba's economy; the Premier refuses to listen to them.

Why is the Premier refusing to listen to Manitobans, Restaurants Canada, who only grow our economy?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Honourable Speaker, I believe this is one Manitoba, that we are united as a province. And that's why when the members opposite tried to divide Manitobans in the last election, we chose to say, let's focus on the big things together, like fixing health care and strengthening our economy. Now, of course, that's the very same message I took to Kananaskis, Alberta this week. I said that we are one Canada, that we should focus on the big things that unite us, like strengthening health care and making a stronger economy.

The members opposite want to stay in the past and want to dig themselves deeper and deeper into the depths of negativity. We prefer to watch Manitoba's youth soar above and rise up to a bright future as part of one united Canada.

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

**Mr. Khan:** A united Premier only if you get in line with him, only if you support everything that he says. No one believes a word this Premier is saying. He's following his mentor, former premier Greg Selinger's failed playbook.

And here's the playbook: (1) Make a big flashy announcement with no actual plans or details;

(2) Raise your taxes; (3) Spend more of your hard-earned money; (4) Continue to raise taxes yet again, and repeat. That is the NDP way.

The Premier has made one thing very clear: unless you get in line with him, he will cut you out of every single conversation. And that is what he's done with Restaurants Canada, who represent over 40,000 Manitobans, \$4 billion and hundreds of local restaurants, local restaurants that this Premier has picked to be losers because they won't get in line with this Premier.

So how can the Premier justify not meeting with Restaurants Canada when all they want to do is support Manitobans?

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**Mr. Kinew:** Honourable Speaker, I'm a humble servant, serving the people who elected our government—you and your family. And, of course, we've been listening carefully. Over the past few years, what is one of those concerns when it comes to the cost of living that just continues to rise up and up higher and higher on the public policy agenda? Well, of course, it is grocery prices. And so this term, this Legislature, this sitting, what have we focused on? We focused on making groceries more affordable.

We started by freezing the price of milk. We continued by breaking up real estate covenants that were anti-competitive. Why wouldn't the Conservatives support more competition in the grocery sector? And now, with the budget bill, in addition to bringing in rent relief and help with your mortgage costs, we are taking all the tax off at the grocery store. I encourage you to buy a rotisserie chicken. I encourage you to buy a salad. I encourage you to buy a no name case of—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

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

### Procurement Contracts US-Based Companies

**Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):** A real patriot stands up for Canada all the time, not part-time like this Premier. A patriot stands up for all—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:** —of the workers and Canadian businesses all the time.

This Premier likes to play part-time patriot on television, but his actions—his actions—that he talks about tell a very different story. *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:** In 2025, Elon Musk publicly marked—mocked Canada and questioned our sovereignty. So what did this part-time patriot Premier do? He travelled to Washington, DC, posed for pictures and publicly bragged about meeting Elon Musk. *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:** And now, this very part-time patriot Premier has awarded Elon Musk's company a contract worth five times what it was.

Why is the Premier's response to attacks on Canadian sovereignty to support Elon Musk by sending more of Manitoba's hard-earned money to the United States of America?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Honourable Speaker, somebody has to stack up—stick up for Canada. And I was happy to do it this week in Canada with Alberta.

Now, of course, I will work with Premier Danielle Smith when it benefits the country. But where she tries to break up Canada, I will speak up for the true North, strong and free that all Canadians, including young kids in Alberta, will continue to be part of the greatest country on earth.

The only part-time patriots are on the Progressive Conservative Party. It was just yesterday morning when the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) criticized me for saying that Alberta should be part of Canada. It's bad enough when you've got separatist elements as part of other provinces, but what are separatist sympathizers doing right here in Manitoba?

Will the member opposite address the treachery in his ranks?

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

\* (14:00)

**Mr. Khan:** It is a sad, sad day in Manitoba when their Premier stands up and thinks that protecting and standing up for Manitoba means sending millions of dollars to the United States of America. Because that is exactly what this NDP government and part-time patriot Premier has done, Honourable Speaker.

This Kinew government is sending millions of your dollars—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:** —to the United States of America while local companies are struggling, local Manitobans are struggling. They create jobs here in Manitoba, and this Premier chooses to send millions of dollars to the United States.

We know this Premier cares more about his federal spotlight than he does about Manitobans, and more about the United States than he does about supporting local Manitoba businesses.

So can the Premier tell Manitobans why—why—if he's pretending to stand up for Canada, he sent \$36 million to an American-owned company and increased Elon Musk contract by five—

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

**Mr. Kinew:** I'll stand up for Canada any day, any time or place. I love this country. This country took a little kid from the reserve and gave me the beautiful family, wonderful career and amazing life that I have today. And for that, I will forever be grateful, as should all young people in this country. We should all be patriots and we should all find ways to give back to the communities that have provided for us.

The members opposite—since he was sitting at the Cabinet table, this government has reduced US procurement by 31 per cent. So perhaps in the final question, he'll explain why there was so much more money heading to the United States of America. We know that he said about Donald Trump on YouTube: Thank you; I would say thank you. He was talking about the tariffs that have taken money off of your family's dinner table.

We will never thank Donald Trump. We will never bow down to America. We will always be the true North—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

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

**Mr. Khan:** Once again, this part-time Premier—patriot Premier, thinks that sending money to the United States of America, \$36 million to Aramark, five times the contract to Elon Musk and now awarding an online company that does a survey to an American company.

Honourable Speaker, Manitobans can see through this Premier. They know he's all talk. They know he cares more about the national spotlight than he does about helping Manitobans. If he did, he would listen to Manitobans and say that their junk food tax is not

good enough, that he'd increase their basic personal exemption to put money back into the pockets of Manitobans. But he's not. He's sending money to the United States of America that should stay here in Manitoba.

If the Premier is so determined to take money out of Manitoba's families' pockets, destroy jobs and destroy local businesses and send that to the United States, when will the Premier officially announce his weak and short run for Prime Minister? Get out of the way of the—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**Mr. Kinew:** I hate to break it, but their worst nightmare is true: I'm not going anywhere. I'm staying right here to keep winning election after election, saving you money, fixing your health care, opening new emergency rooms.

Now, the members opposite have stumbled onto a piece of news. Here's the thing: when it comes to Elon Musk and his affinity for supporting Donald Trump's attacks on Canada, we cut him off. We ended the subsidies for Tesla vehicles in this country.

And news afoot, when we're talking about modes of conveyance, would show you that Tesla Canada has recently put the Manitoba government on notice. Tesla Canada intends to file legal action against us for cutting off Elon. And we have a simple message to them: Elon, get Donald Trump to stop the tariffs, and then we can talk about the EV rebates.

#### **Basic Personal Income Tax—Exemption Increase Government Vote on Resolution**

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Manitobans are struggling under this NDP. Manitoba has the highest inflation in Canada, the highest food inflation in Canada, the highest property taxes in Canada and the highest education property taxes in Canada.

Our PC team has proposed to bring in real affordability relief for Manitobans by increasing the basic personal exemption by letting Manitobans keep \$3,000 of their own money every single year. Instead, this NDP stood up by—one by one this morning and voted against an affordability proposal.

So will the MLAs for Waverley, Lagimodière, Kildonan-River East and McPhillips stand up and defend why they are denying their—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** Honourable Speaker, on the one hand, you've got a group offering something that will create huge disproportionate benefits to the wealthiest in Manitoba, create a huge fiscal hole, result in another \$2-billion deficit. That's their offer.

What's our offer? Targeted relief that Manitobans need now, like taking the PST off of all groceries across this entire province. We know that Manitobans need that relief, and we've been doing that important work to bring forward targeted solutions to lower their costs. The PCs have been fighting against this for weeks.

Again, we need to bring these savings for July 1. This team's doing the work. We're going to keep doing the work to reduce costs for Manitobans.

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

**Mrs. Stone:** Manitoba is the only province in Canada that has cancelled indexation at a time when inflationary pressures are hurting Manitobans the most. Manitoba has the highest inflation in the country and yet, this NDP cancelled indexation, pushing more Manitobans into higher tax brackets.

How can this NDP justify to Manitobans who are within \$200 of insolvency that they refuse to give those families back \$3,000 a year? How do they justify that?

**MLA Sala:** What we say to Manitobans is, you finally have a government that actually cares about you and the challenges you're facing. And we've shown that over and over and over when it comes to their costs.

For example, gas tax, what did we do? Right out of the gate, we cut the gas tax for an entire year. And then we brought in a permanent 10 per cent cut. And then we brought in a hydro rate freeze. We're bringing in a—benefits credit increases are going to help homeowners to keep their costs low; we're bringing in credits increases that are going to help renters to keep their costs low.

And now, of course, when it comes to food costs, we're doing the work to make sure that our government reduces the cost of food for Manitobans. With this PST elimination, we know that's another step we're taking in addition to the freezing of a one-litre jug of—price of milk, as well as the important work we're doing to create more competition—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

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

**Mrs. Stone:** This NDP's budget has failed to provide any meaning, real 'affordability' for Manitobans. Manitobans are speaking up. They're sending emails. They're signing petitions. They're posting on the NDP's social media that they agree with our proposal to increase the basic personal exemption to \$30,000, saving families \$3,000 a year.

But this NDP isn't listening. They're not listening to those Manitobans because they don't care that Manitobans are deeply struggling right now.

So how can they deny those struggling low-income families \$3,000 a year? Why are they denying that much-needed relief?

**MLA Sala:** We're bringing relief to Manitobans, Honourable Speaker, unlike what the members opposite are proposing, which, again, is going to result in a \$2-billion deficit, credit rating downgrades—who knows? It's a billion-dollar proposal. They just have not done the work and it's not serious.

On this side of the House, what are we doing? We're bringing forward relief for Manitobans. Real relief. We brought it forward in this BITSA bill, which they've been fighting for weeks. They seem to not want to help Manitobans get the relief they need. On this side of the House, each and every day, Manitobans know they can count on us to get the job done. Let's bring PST savings to Manitobans for July 1 today.

### **Property Taxes Brandon, Manitoba**

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** Property tax bills have hit Brandon's mailboxes, and Brandonites are outraged. This government jacked up the tax bills by 6.7 per cent at a time when many families can't afford to even buy basic needs.

Why is this government forcing my constituents and all Brandonites to pay more just to support this minister's failures?

\* (14:10)

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** Honourable Speaker, when it comes to education and property taxes, this team is doing the work to lower them for Manitobans. With our first budget, we brought in a \$1,500 credit. Last budget, that was raised to \$1,600. And now, of course, our last budget proposed to raise

that to \$1,700, bringing huge savings to Manitobans to lower their cost of operating a home.

But we're not just helping homeowners; we're helping renters too. The members opposite raised taxes on renters by \$175, and we're doing the work of restoring that renters' tax credit and we're bringing it up to \$675. Again, that's in this BITSA bill that the members opposite—it's a big mystery why they're fighting against tax cuts for Manitobans, but that's what they're fighting against.

We're doing the work of reducing costs, including the cost of owning and operating a home with our education—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Brandon West, on a supplementary question.

#### **Basic Personal Income Tax—Exemption Increase Government Vote on Resolution**

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** A \$100 savings in 2027 while they're expecting thousands of dollars from Manitobans now. This is another clear example of being Brandon-blind and Westman-weak.

This morning, they showed that again by voting against Manitobans and against affordability. Families in my riding are crying out for tax relief, and so are local businesses. Brandon families are tired of just surviving under this government.

How could this government vote against leaving more money in the pockets of Brandonites and all Manitobans?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** Honourable Speaker, this member and all members opposite seem to forget what we're doing here. We're proposing to cut taxes from Manitobans. Get on board. You want to help your constituents? Support the BITSA bill. We're going to take the PST off groceries. We're going to increase the tax credits for renters. We're going to increase tax credits for homeowners.

If he wants to help individuals living in his constituency, he should stand up today and support the BITSA bill.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Brandon West, on a final supplementary question.

**Mr. Balcaen:** Half of Manitobans, including my constituents, are \$200 a month or less from being able to pay their bills and service their debt. Families can't afford groceries and, for many, a car repair makes

a difference between solvency and insolvency. This government's only solution is their PST PR gimmick.

Why did this government vote against our common sense plan to raise the personal exemption so Brandon families can keep more of their pocket—of their money in their pockets?

**MLA Sala:** Honourable Speaker, if the member opposite cares about affordability challenges, he should support this BITSA bill and he should support our budget.

We've done incredibly important work in helping to bring savings to Manitobans and, of course, we're proposing here free transit for youth in Manitoba. No cost for child care for the lowest income families in this province. Let's take the PST off all groceries. These are real targeted measures that are going to help Manitobans where they need it.

Years of inaction by the members opposite left Manitobans in a tough position. They left government—they left Manitobans with the highest inflation we've seen in recent memory: 8 per cent. What did we do when we got in? We quashed that immediately with a gas tax cut. Only one team in this province that wants to make life more affordable; they're sitting on this side of the House, Honourable Speaker.

#### **PST Exemption on Prepared Foods Convenience Stores and Restaurants**

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** Honourable Speaker, this NDP government has created confusion and division between grocery stores, convenience stores and local restaurants over who qualifies for their misleading PST exemption scheme. That's what happens when this NDP government constantly picks winners and losers instead of supporting all Manitobans equally.

Can the Finance Minister confirm whether restaurants and all prepared foods will be included in this PST policy? Simply yes or no.

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** Honourable Speaker, by taking the PST off all groceries, we are helping all Manitobans. It's that simple. And, again, the member opposite stands here; he fights against BITSA. That's a bill that has a proposal for a \$1,700 education property tax rebate. It proposes to take education property taxes off of almost every single home in the member's riding.

We're doing the work to lower costs for Manitobans. Again, for years, Manitobans had a government that didn't care, that jacked up hydro rates,

that raised taxes on renters, made life more expensive for producers. This team is doing the work to make life more affordable. We're going to keep doing that, and we ask the members opposite: stand up today, do something with your time in this House, support the BITSA bill now.

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

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

#### **Restaurants Canada Consultation**

**Mr. Narth:** Honourable Speaker, I asked about restaurants specifically. Restaurants Canada, a national organization representing 42,000 Manitobans working in their sector say repeatedly that they have tried meeting with this Premier but were told he's too busy.

Meanwhile, the Finance Minister claims they regularly consulted with Restaurants Canada. But Kelly Higginson, president of Restaurants Canada, told the Free Press they were never consulted on the PST ploy and couldn't even secure a meeting to discuss PST exemption on prepared takeout foods.

Why could this Premier not be bothered to meet with them and why did the Finance Minister lie about his consultation with—

**An Honourable Member:** Lie?

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The Speaker is standing. The Speaker is standing and will be heard in silence whether members like it or not.

And the honourable member for La Vérendrye has used unparliamentary language. He will withdraw it and apologize.

**Mr. Narth:** Honourable Speaker, I withdraw and apologize.

#### **French spoken**

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Monsieur le Président, à cause du question du membre de La Vérendrye (M. Narth) qui était en train d'attaquer le meilleur ministre de la finance (DAL Sala) dans tout le pays du Canada, moi, je veux répondre pour dire simplement que nous avons toujours des rencontres, des réunions avec des Manitobains et Manitobaines, incluant ceux qui travaillent dans le restaurant, ceux qui sont les employeurs dans les restaurants. Mais, c'est la réalité que les défis qui étaient décrits par les Manitobains et Manitobaines pour plusieurs années, c'est au magasin

quand il fait leur 'baganisage.' Et puis là, ça c'est où nous vont leur aider.

Les Conservateurs devraient nous appuyer pour appuyer vous, les Manitobains – les résidents de la meilleure province dans toute la confédération.

#### **Translation**

*Mr. Speaker, in response to the question from the member for La Vérendrye, who was attacking the best Finance Minister in all of Canada, I simply want to say that we are always meeting with Manitobans, including those who work in restaurants and those who are restaurant owners. But the reality is that the challenges Manitobans have been describing for years are the ones they face at the store when they're doing their grocery shopping. And that's where we're going to help them.*

*The Conservatives should support us so we can support you, the Manitobans—the residents of the best province in the entire Confederation.*

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

#### **Basic Personal Tax Exemption Increase Request**

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** Well, Honourable Speaker, I table the article from yesterday when Kelly Higginson, president of Restaurants Canada, states this Premier refused repeated meeting requests while the Finance Minister claimed they regularly consulted with Restaurants Canada. Once again, Manitobans are seeing a government that failed to consult before rushing ahead with another political gimmick.

Instead of creating this division, why won't this government provide real affordability relief by raising the basic income exemption so Manitobans can decide for themselves what they spend their hard-earned money on?

#### **French spoken**

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Si le membre continue à attaquer un de mes collègues, je vais continuer de le répondre dans deux langues officielles.

Quand c'est – quand on parle de la question que le membre a avancée, toute sa question est basée que le fait que notre budget va appuyer les Manitobains et vos familles. Il est en train de reconnaître que couper les impôts au magasin va aider votre famille, et son seule question – sa seule question est de demander : pourquoi pas le faire plus ?

La réponse est : ça, c'est un budget avec beaucoup d'appui pour la famille, avec beaucoup d'appui pour le logement abordable, et puis avec le budget déficit le plus petit dans tout le pays.

### **Translation**

*If the member continues to attack one of my colleagues, I will continue to respond to him in both official languages.*

*When it comes to—when we're talking about the issue the member raised, his entire argument is based on the fact that our budget will support Manitobans and their families. He is acknowledging that cutting taxes at the store will help your family, and his only question—his only question is: why not do more?*

*The answer is: this is a budget with strong support for families, with strong support for affordable housing and with the smallest budget deficit in the entire country.*

### **English**

So, for translation for the members opposite, if you keep attacking my colleagues, I'll keep dunking on you in both official languages. And your whole premise of your question is that cutting the PST is good. So support BITSA.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order.

\* (14:20)

Stop the clock.

### **Introduction of Guests**

**The Speaker:** I would like to introduce some guests that I believe are still in the gallery—I hope they're still here—and draw—*[interjection]*

Order, please. Order.

I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Patrick Simard, uncle; and Joel Simard, cousin, who are guests of the honourable Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations (Mr. Simard).

And we welcome you here today.

### **Basic Personal Income Tax—Exemption Increase Government Vote on Resolution**

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** Honourable Speaker, Manitoba families are struggling to keep up with the cost of groceries, rent, mortgage payments, gas and utilities. The PC plan to double the basic personal

amount to \$30,000 would leave Manitoba families with up to \$3,000 more in their pockets every year.

Why did this government vote against our affordability resolution this morning, giving Manitoba families \$3,000 more per year, instead—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. King:** —of forcing them to send their—more of their paycheques back to this government?

### **French spoken**

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Monsieur le Président, je suis un peu déçu de — d'avoir la responsabilité de décrire ce que le membre de La Vérendrye (M. Narth) juste venait de dire à notre collègue de Saint-Boniface après que le député de Saint-Boniface (DAL Loiselle) a dit : Mais, le Premier ministre parle français, tu pourrais écouter sur votre écouteur.

Le membre de La Vérendrye a dit : I asked the question in English. Puis, après ça, le député de moi, le Premier ministre de Manitoba, a dit quelque chose à lui, et puis il a répondu : I didn't ask the question in French.

Je voudrais juste dire que cette Chambre est une institution bilingue. C'est-à-dire que ça ne dépend pas si la personne a demandé la question en anglais ou français, nous avons le droit, la responsabilité de répondre dans le français ou dans l'anglais. Ça, c'est ce qu'on dit quand on dit une province véritablement bilingue. Je voudrais demander au membre de dire —

### **Translation**

*Mr. Speaker, I am a little disappointed to—to have to describe what the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth) just said to our colleague from St. Boniface after the member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle) said: But the Prime Minister speaks French; you could listen through your earpiece.*

*The member for La Vérendrye said: I asked the question in English. Then, after that, the member for my riding, the Premier of Manitoba, said something to him, and he replied: I didn't ask the question in French.*

*I would just like to say that this House is a bilingual institution. That is to say, it does not matter whether the person asked the question in English or French; we have the right and the responsibility to answer in French or in English. That is what we mean when we say a truly bilingual province. I would like to ask the member to say—*

**The Speaker:** Member's time is expired.

The honourable member for—[*interjection*] Order.

The honourable member for Lakeside, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. King:** Honourable Speaker, for a family trying to pay bills, keep their children fed and make ends meet, \$3,000 a year is not a small amount. It's real affordability relief that would make a substantial difference at the kitchen table.

Does this Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) not agree with giving families \$3,000 more each year to help feed their children is a good idea?

**French spoken**

**Mr. Kinew:** Alors, je m'excuse d'avoir pris trop long dans la dernière réponse. Alors, je demande à le membre de La Vérendrye (M. Narth) de s'excuser à la Francophonie manitobaine pour ses commentaires aujourd'hui. Y a beaucoup de Francophones dans son circonscription. Y a beaucoup – même le nom de son – le nom de sa circonscription est dans la langue française : La Vérendrye. Et ça décrit une histoire de l'affaire francophone dans notre province.

Alors, la manière où il a lancé ce commentaire à le député de Saint-Boniface (DAL Loiselle), ça nous montre qu'il y a beaucoup de travail à faire pour respecter les droits de les Francophones, qui ont dû – qui ont dû lutter pour leur droit de langue minoritaire ici dans notre province. Nous, comme les néos, nous les appuyent. Les Conservateurs sont toujours en train de leur nuire.

**Translation**

*I apologize for taking too long with my last response. I'm asking the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth) to apologize to Manitoba's francophone community for his comments today. There are a lot of francophones in his riding. There are a lot—even the name of his—the name of his riding is in French: La Vérendrye. And that reflects the history of the francophone community in our province.*

*The way he made that comment to the member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle) shows us that there is a lot of work to be done to respect the rights of francophones, who have had to fight for their minority language rights here in our province. We, as NDPs, support them. The Conservatives are always working against them.*

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

**Mr. King:** Honourable Speaker, Manitobans do not need—[*interjection*]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. King:** –token measures that barely touch the cost of living. They need broad, meaningful tax relief that leaves more money in their pockets every paycheque. Doubling the basic personal amount to \$30,000 would help working families, seniors and low-income Manitobans keep more of what they earn.

Why won't this government support this PC plan to give Manitobans real affordability relief?

**French spoken**

**Mr. Kinew:** Les Conservateurs ne sont pas sérieux. Nous avons avancé un budget sérieux avec des appuis pour vous et votre famille, et puis avec un plan pour réduire le déficit ici dans notre province. Mais en partageant cet message dans la langue française, est-ce qu'on a des réponses sérieuses ? Dans – même dans anglais ? Non. On a un commentaire d'un député avec une circonscription qui a un nom français qui en train de dire à un député qui est fièrement francophone : I asked a question in English; I didn't ask it in French.

Ça, c'est un exemple pour les jeunes dans le Manitoba de comment pas respecter la Francophonie manitobaine. Ici, dans notre gouvernement, nous avons la responsabilité pour tous les Manitobains et Manitobaines, n'importe langue que vous parlez chez vous. Et nous serons toujours là pour appuyer vous et votre famille, pour un système de santé augmenté, et puis plusieurs appuis pour une vie plus abordable.

**Translation**

*The Conservatives are not serious. We put forward a serious budget with support for you and your family, and a plan to reduce the deficit here in our province. But when we share this message in French, do we get serious responses? In—even in English? No. We have a comment from a member of the Legislature representing a riding with a French name, who is telling a member who is proudly francophone: I asked a question in English; I didn't ask it in French.*

*For young people in Manitoba, this is an example of how not to respect Manitoba's francophone community. Here, in our government, we are responsible for all Manitobans, no matter what language you speak at home. And we will always be there to support you and your family, to strengthen the health-care system and to provide various forms of support for a more affordable life.*

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

### Number of Practising Physicians Recruitment Announcement

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** Honourable Speaker, from day one, our government has been focused on recruiting and retaining the doctors Manitobans need. Thanks to the hard work of health-care workers and strong partnership across the system, Manitoba is making real progress rebuilding front-line care. And today our government and Doctors Manitoba are celebrating a major milestone.

Can the Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care please tell Manitobans a bit more about this exciting announcement?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** I thank my friend, the MLA from the Burrows, for that wonderful, wonderful—apologies, Honourable Speaker—I thank my friend and colleague for that wonderful question.

After years of cuts under the PC government, we are rebuilding Manitoba's health-care system, and we're seeing the results. Not only does Manitoba lead all of Canada in access to a family doctor, but today, Doctors Manitoba confirmed that there are now a record over 3,700 doctors working here in Manitoba. That is a record for our great province.

And we're working hard to grow that number every single day. We're expanding training seats, we're improving recruitment, and we're working every day to ensure retention. So—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

### Basic Personal Tax Exemption Increase Request

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** My colleague from Brandon West asked about families losing everything, and I watched the Premier sit in his chair laughing at those constituents that are starving out there.

Manitobans are being crushed by grocery prices, rent, mortgages and payroll taxes. Yet this NDP government refuses to support raising the basic personal exemption to \$30,000, a plan that would let hard-working Manitobans keep more of their paycheque.

Why is this NDP government choosing to push low- and middle-income Manitobans with higher taxes? Why now?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Three quick facts for the record.

Page 144 of this budget lays out the net impacts of all tax measures. Taxes are going down \$50 million because of the budget that they are trying to delay.

Second fact is that Harvest Manitoba, who works on the front lines with Manitobans who are struggling, asked us to cut the sales tax on all food and drinks at the grocery store. They asked; we are delivering.

The third fact I would put on the record is that as these Conservatives criticize, divide and delay, we are missing out on needed investments in health care, needed investments in school, needed investments in transit—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —for youth, needed investments in a new menopause clinic for women, needed investments in repairing highways and roads across the province, needed investments in growing the economy, including—

\* (14:30)

**The Speaker:** Member's time is expired.

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

**MLA Bereza:** Well, if we're going to talk about checking things out, maybe the Premier can check on page 7 of his budget, where it calls for a \$1.1-billion education—that is ridiculous—property tax increase. A PC government will raise the basic personal exemption to \$30,000 so Manitobans can stop paying taxes on the first \$30,000.

Can the minister explain why this NDP government believes a single parent, a tradesperson or on fixed income should be paying higher taxes, or why the education property taxes are being raised by 1.1—

**The Speaker:** Member's time is expired.

**Mr. Kinew:** Honourable Speaker, the basic personal exemption is higher under us than it ever was under them. So if it was such a good idea, why didn't they do it when they were at Cabinet? Why did they focus on dividing Manitobans?

But there is news afoot on another front as well, and that is that, from what I understand, tomorrow is the end of an era in Manitoba journalism. The Canadian Press's Steve Lambert is set to retire. The fifth estate is a very, very important institution in our democracy, and while we may not like the headlines and the quotes that get used in each of the stories,

we all respect the importance of journalism. And so I want to thank Mr. Lambert.

### ***French spoken***

Je voudrais remercier le Monsieur Lambert pour sa carrière exceptionnelle.

### ***Translation***

*I would like to thank Mr. Lambert for his outstanding career.*

### ***English***

I thank him for his service.

**The Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired.

## **PETITIONS**

### **Programs for Adolescents with Disabilities**

**Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):**

I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

The current self-managed adolescent-care model places additional workloads onto already stressed families, requiring parents to seek all alternative options and prove their need for care.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

(3) To urge the Minister of Families to arrange for a full review of employment supports provided by Children with 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.

*Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

This petition was signed by Rachel Goy, Diane Branen-Bruen [*phonetic*] and Ramasani Asrayah and many, many other Manitobans.

### **Manitoba Jobs Agreement**

**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) The Manitoba jobs agreement imposes additional requirements, fees and red tape that increase the cost of public infrastructure projects. Higher construction costs ultimately mean taxpayers pay more, reducing the number of projects that the government can afford to complete, exacerbating the rising cost of living.

(2) Manitoba is already suffering from a shortage of schools, hospitals and other public infrastructure projects in rapidly growing areas of the province, along with the construction workers to build them.

(3) According to Statistics Canada, 88 per cent of the 60,000 Manitobans who work in the construction sector are not unionized and will therefore be discriminated against from working on public construction sites.

(4) The Winnipeg Construction Association, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association and the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba have joined together to formally request the Auditor General

investigate the accountability failures of the Manitoba jobs agreement under the NDP government.

(5) When government restricts competition, taxpayers always pay more and get less. The Manitoba jobs agreement means less competition, higher costs and fewer schools, hospitals, bridges for the same amount of public money.

(6) The Manitoba jobs agreement funnels money to the NDP's government's political allies, rather than prioritizing the completion of public infrastructure projects, such as schools and hospitals from Winnipeg to Brandon to Neepawa.

(7) Public projects funded by public dollars should be open to every qualified company and every qualified worker. The government should restore open, fair and competitive tendering process to ensure that all construction firms have equal opportunity to participate in public infrastructure projects such as the North End waste water treatment plant.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To immediately repeal the job-killing Manitoba jobs agreement and restore open, fair and competitive bidding on all publicly funded infrastructure projects such as schools, hospitals and water and waste water projects.

\* (14:40)

(2) To ensure all qualified Manitoba workers and businesses have equal opportunity to participate in public projects.

(3) To prioritize policies that lower construction costs and therefore the cost of living and to maximize the number of infrastructure projects delivered for taxpayers.

(4) To provide a full and transparent breakdown of the costs of the Manitoba jobs agreement that will be passed on to Manitobans and a clear breakdown of the projects that will have to be postponed or cancelled due to the agreement.

This is signed by Jacob Mulvin *[phonetic]*, Ken Dueck, David Ping *[phonetic]* and many, many, many more Manitobans.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll remember all members that—I'll remind all members that you can read up to three names at the end of your petition, and you can say the word many twice at the end of your petition.

### Placement Vetting for Elderly Persons Housing

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

This petition has been signed by John Pasternak, Wendy Kooistra, Derek Chez and many, many other Manitobans.

### Intersection of PTH 75 and PR 305

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

(7)–

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

I'd invite the member to speak up a little bit so that our Hansard and ASL interpreters could perform their roles.

**Mr. Schuler:** (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 media-term strategies identified in the 2022 study is required.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This is signed by Theresa Tinsley, Okasawa Storli [*phonetic*], Edward Storli [*phonetic*] and many other Manitobans.

### MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction for the new Portage regional health facility is well under way. The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit from the 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 a computer-generated radio wave to create detailed images of organs and tissues in the human body. It is used for disease detection, diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

\* (14:50)

(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 service and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

(5) 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 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 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 the placement of an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

This petition is signed by Kim Menard *[phonetic]*, Sandra Lambert and Sandra Kambert *[phonetic]* and many, many Manitobans.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

#### **Intersection of PTH 75 and PR 305**

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

And, honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition is signed by Julie Allen, Jason Allen, Darlene Lecuyer and many, many other fine Manitobans.

**The Deputy Speaker:** No more petitions? Grievances?

#### **Programs for Adolescents with Disabilities**

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

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

(3) While developing children may be entering into extracurricular activities, school clubs or spending time with friends independently, children with disabilities have reduced opportunities for such

social and recreational opportunities due to the lack of spaces.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

(3) To urge the Minister of Families to arrange for a full review of employment supports provided by Children's disABILITY Services for children 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 has been signed by Martina McLaughlan, Kailey Armstrong, Tosha Korman and many, many, many more Manitobans.

**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) 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.

\* (15:00)

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

(5) The current adolescent-care system, as part of 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 the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

Honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition has been signed by Carla Robinson, Genadri Myhre, Courtney Kovachik and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you.

### Green Valley School Expansion

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The residents of La Vérendrye and other areas around Manitoba are extremely frustrated and concerned by the provincial government's decision to cancel the school expansion project for Green Valley School in Grunthal.

(2) In 2021, the PC provincial government committed funding to expand Green Valley School for a new gymnasium and classrooms.

(3) The school is so crowded that three mobile classrooms were added to alleviate overcrowding in classrooms.

(4) In order for construction to begin, the school removed all three portable classrooms, leaving Green Valley in a further critical state of overcrowding.

(5) As a result of overcrowding, parents are choosing to home-school their children due to safety concerns and the challenges associated with overcrowding.

(6) The current Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning have said they are committed to investing in education.

(7) The concerns of residents of La Vérendrye and the surrounding area are being ignored by the provincial government.

(8) The lack of space in the school is affecting the quality of education and extracurricular activities for students.

(9) The minister and Premier have a duty to respond to the educational needs of children and youth identified by rural communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to immediately bring back the three portable classrooms to help alleviate the stress and overcrowding classrooms.

(2) To urge the provincial government to reinstate the expansion project for Green Valley School.

This petition has been signed by Candice Bakx-Friesen, Martha Petruwich [*phonetic*] and

Nathan Petrowich [*phonetic*] and many, many other Manitobans.

### Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** 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 administration of justice, allowing for meaningful provincial action on bail reform to ensure public safety.

#### *The Speaker in the Chair*

(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) 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 the 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 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.

Now, this petition has been signed by Krista Hodgkin [*phonetic*]-Hodgins, Zoe Murray-Mulvey and Judith Olson and many, many fine Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### **Programs for Adolescents with Disabilities**

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

\* (15:10)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

(2) To urge the provincial government to immediately implement official policies and procedures that are more respectful and fully 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 was signed by Norma Jean McKay, Sheila McKay and Jalyn Morrisseau and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### **Sustaining Cash as Payment Option in Manitoba**

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

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

(1) Cash remains the only form of legal tender that protects personal privacy, ensures financial inclusion for those without access to digital payment systems and provides a reliable method of payment during service disruptions.

(2) The Bank of Canada recognizes cash as legal tender, yet current provincial law allows private businesses to refuse cash.

(3) The increasing refusal of the acceptance of cash for purchases by businesses in Winnipeg and across Manitoba undermines consumer choice, discriminates against vulnerable populations and erodes the role of cash in the economy.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to enact legislation that requires all businesses operating in the province to accept cash as a method of payment for goods and services, including vending machines; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to enact legislation that requires so-called cashless businesses to offer alternatives for customers who use cash, such as an exact-change policy or a reverse ATM.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

### Programs for Adolescents with Disabilities

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

(3) To urge the Minister of Families to arrange for a full review of employment supports provided by Children's disABILITY Services for children 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 Tiffany Murray, Agenor Chaput, Aline Chaput and many, many more fine Manitobans.

### Phoenix School

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Phoenix School, 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.

\* (15:20)

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

### **Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders**

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** I wish to thank you, Honourable Speaker. I wish to present the following petition.

(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 continued victimization of law-abiding Manitobans while granting repeat offenders additional rights.

This is signed by Judy Verwey, Arnold Verwey, Sarah Verwey and many, many more friendly Manitobans.

### **School-Supported Lunch Programs in Brandon**

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, and the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Parent councils across the Brandon School Division have united as the Brandon Parent Council Collaborative to collectively advocate for safer, more sustainable lunch programming and to change the legislation to be equitable and inclusive for all students.

(2) Parent-led lunch programs have historically operated under a model that is no longer reflective of current societal and family realities, with 'moust'—most households having all adults working outside the home.

(3) The geographic expansion of school catchment areas, combined with school-of-choice enrolment, has increased the need for accessible, school-supported lunch programs for all students, not just those classified as bus students.

(4) Students are increasingly dependent on schools for midday nutrition, supervision and emotional stability, making the lunch period a vital part of the school day that impacts safety, readiness to learn and overall well-being.

(5) There is widespread willingness among educational assistants to support lunch programs if formalized through the Brandon School Division.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to acknowledge lunch programming as a core component of the school day, deserving of proper planning, staffing and oversight by the school divisions, not volunteer, parent-led councils.

(2) To urge the provincial government to change school policies so they are equitable for all students, not just those classified as bus students; and

(3) To urge the provincial government to change school policies to designate 60 minutes in the middle of each day as a period of education, not child care.

And, Honourable Speaker, this petition was signed by Humansu [*phonetic*] Shah, Nikitu Shah, Ian Healey and many, many other fine Manitobans.

**The Speaker:** No further petitions? Grievances?

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Honourable Speaker, can you please call all stages of Bill 53, followed by third reading and concurrence of Bill 5, Bill 6, Bill 36, Bill 35, Bill 29 and Bill 45.

\* (15:30)

**The Speaker:** So it's been announced that we will now proceed to all stages of Bill 53, followed by concurrence and third reading of bills 53, 5, 6, 36, 35, 29 and 45.

The honourable member for Agassiz, on House business?

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** On House business.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Agassiz, on House Business.

**Ms. Byram:** Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House for leave, (1) to not see the clock until all questions have been put at Committee of the Whole and at concurrence and third reading of Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026; and (2) to allow a one-hour recess from 6 to 7 with a five-minute bell at the end of that hour.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to allow the two requests made by the honourable member for Agassiz?

Is there leave?

**An Honourable Member:** Agreed.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Speaker:** No. I hear no.

Leave has been denied.

So then, we will now proceed to Committee of the Whole for Bill 53.

Deputy Speaker, please take the chair.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

**The Chairperson (Tyler Blashko):** Will the Committee of the Whole please come to order.

As announced, this committee will now consider the following: Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 53 have an opening statement?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** I'm very pleased to speak to Bill 53, our budget bill that brings savings to homeowners and renters and removes the PST from all groceries starting July 1.

For weeks now, members opposite have been filibustering this bill and delaying relief for Manitobans. While families are feeling pressure every time they go to the grocery store the opposition has chosen to delay.

On this side of the House, we're focused on delivering relief, not delaying it. Let's pass this bill and make sure Manitobans can start saving on July 1.

Thank you so much.

**The Chairperson:** We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

\* (15:40)

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** I want to start first by saying that the budget bill that the NDP government has put forward misses the moment for Manitobans. It's been very clear, over the past number of weeks, that this NDP does not even believe in their own budget bill. They refused to sit late earlier this week to pass through second reading of the bill. They've then again said that they don't want to stay late tonight to pass third reading, despite the fact that their boss, the Premier (Mr. Kinew), indicated that he wanted this done by May 28, which is today.

So, time and time again, this NDP government has shown that they don't believe in their bill. And the reason they don't believe in their budget bill is because they know it does not do enough for Manitobans. Manitobans are living in an affordability and a cost-of-living crisis. Manitoba has the highest inflation in the country at 4.3 per cent. Manitoba has the highest food inflation in the country at 4.9 per cent. And over 50 per cent of Manitobans are

within-reporting that they are within \$200 of insolvency. More Manitobans, compared to other provinces, are relying more and more on credit card debt.

And what this shows is that Manitobans need more. Manitobans need more than the pennies that this NDP government is offering them. Manitobans need real affordability relief because Manitobans are struggling and they are struggling deeply. This is why, over the past number of months, we have been calling on the NDP to raise the basic personal exemption to \$30,000. What this would do is it would ensure Manitobans would pay zero provincial income tax on their first \$30,000 of income.

That would return \$3,000 a year back to Manitoba families. It would return over \$1,500 back to a single person, perhaps that low-income mom who's trying to pay for her family, to pay for food on the table, pay for gas to get to work, pay for fuel to get her kids to sports, perhaps pay for child care and daycare throughout the summer months. Or that \$3,000 could be for that family that needs additional money to pay for whatever their household budget challenges are. Because we on our side of the House, we know that every family has a different household budget and that their households have very different challenges. That could be affording to pay for healthy food, which we know with Manitoba's food inflation being the highest in the country at 4.9 per cent, those dollars could go a long way.

But we also know some Manitobans are struggling to pay for fuel. We have significantly high fuel costs at the moment. Those Manitobans need extra dollars to get to work, to get their kids to school, to sports practices. But we also know some Manitobans need that extra money to pay for camp and daycare. Or Manitobans might want that extra money to just have a nice family night out, whether that's a pizza night out, bowling. Manitobans know best how to spend their hard-earned dollars.

And that's why returning \$3,000 back to Manitoba families, they're the ones that can determine where they need that money the most. And Manitobans have spoken up. Manitobans have written emails and letters. They've signed petitions. They're reaching out to this NDP government to let them know that what this NDP has brought forward in their budget bill is simply not enough during a cost-of-living crisis. Manitobans want to see the basic personal exemption increase to \$30,000 dollars. Manitobans want that \$3,000 back in their pockets at the end of the day.

Manitobans are speaking up loud and clear. The problem is this NDP is not listening. They haven't listened over the past number of months. They didn't listen after over 50 hours of debate and discussion on this topic, and they're not listening to Manitobans who are calling for them to do more. Because this budget bill that we're discussing today, and have been discussing, does not do enough for Manitoba families, and that's clear.

And what's clear is this NDP is embarrassed by their budget bill. They are so embarrassed that they don't even want to talk about it. They haven't put up a single speaker to discuss their own budget. If they believed in their budget so much as they say they do, their members would speak to it, but they haven't. If they believed in their budget so much, they would have been willing to stay late to discuss it and to pass second reading earlier this week, but they did not. If they believed in their budget so much, they'd be willing to stay tonight to discuss it and pass it, but they do not believe it.

Manitobans need more and our PC team are supporting Manitobans.

Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** We thank the member.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Also, if there is agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to pages, with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members have—or may have comments, questions or amendments to propose.

Is that agreed?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

Shall clause 1 pass?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

**Mrs. Stone:** So, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, this budget clearly misses the mark for Manitoba and Manitoba families. This NDP government does not believe in their own budget. They have shown that time and time again, that they're not willing to do the work, they're not willing to stand up for Manitoba families and the affordability relief they needed.

They haven't even been willing up a single speaker outside the minister's required time in these Chambers to speak about their budget bill.

So what that shows is this NDP government is embarrassed with their own budget bill. They're so embarrassed that they don't even want to pass it today. They don't want to pass it earlier this week. They simply don't want to pass that. They do not want to pass this budget bill. And they don't want to pass it because they know it's not enough, and they know that Manitobans are wanting to see an increase to the basic personal exemption.

This minister is the only minister in Canada that has cancelled indexation of income taxes. Every other province in Canada indexes according to income taxes. Because what that does is it ensures that inflation does not push more Manitobans into a higher tax bracket. Manitoba has the highest inflation in the country at 4.3 per cent; the highest food inflation in the country at 4.9 per cent. And every other province, every other finance minister, every other premier across the country has recognized that their citizens need to be protected from inflationary pressures. That is exactly what indexation does.

So while other provinces have increased—have included indexation in their plans or have increased their basic personal exemption, Manitoba is the only province in Canada to do the opposite. And that is very, very telling. This shows that this is an NDP government that does not care about the inflationary pressures and the cost-of-living crisis that is facing Manitobans. If they cared, they would at the very least do the standard to have indexation in the province, like every other province across the country is doing right now.

Because every other province, every other finance minister, every other premier understands that their citizens, that their taxpayers, that families within their provinces are facing high inflationary pressures. The only ones who don't are here in Manitoba, and that is very unfortunate for Manitoba families.

Manitoba families are directly losing out as a result of the decisions that this Finance Minister and this Premier (Mr. Kinew) and this Kinew government have made to push more Manitobans into higher tax brackets. They have brought back bracket creep. They are collecting more income tax from Manitobans despite the fact that Manitoba has the highest provincial income taxes west of the Maritimes; despite the fact that Manitoba has the highest inflation in Canada; despite the fact that Manitoba has the highest

food inflation in Canada, where 55 per cent of Manitobans are within \$200 of insolvency.

This NDP does not care. This NDP does not care that Manitobans are struggling. Because if they truly cared, then they would put more affordability measures in their budget. They would be increasing the basic personal exemption. They would be including indexation to protect Manitobans from high inflationary pressures. But they're doing the opposite. They are not listening to you as Manitobans because they don't care and that is very clear here today.

So we do not support this BITSA bill because we know Manitobans need more. Manitobans need more affordability relief during times of crisis and cost of living, and that is right now. This NDP government is living under a delusion that Manitobans are okay, that everything is sunny, but it's not. And we're hearing from their constituents, we're hearing from Manitoba families across this entire province that they're deeply, deeply struggling. And that's why Manitobans are calling for an increase to the basic personal exemption. That's why Manitobans are calling for more affordability relief right now, because they need it.

\* (15:50)

And we know Manitobans' struggles are real. We know Manitobans know best how to utilize their own household budgets. And we know every household budget is different. Every family has different challenges. It's not up to us to decide what those challenges are. Manitobans know that best. It could be paying for food at the grocery store, fuel to get to and from work or sports or daycare. It could be to put kids into summer camps, put kids into sports or perhaps a extra little amount that Manitobans are not taking their kids or families on a pizza night out or bowling or the movies because they simply can't afford it.

Manitobans know best. That's why we want to put more money into Manitobans' pockets, because Manitobans know best how to spend that money.

Chairperson, it's very disappointing that this NDP government refuses not to listen to Manitobans and the reason is they don't believe in their own budget, they're embarrassed and they simply don't care.

Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Okay, shall clause 1 pass?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Recorded Vote**

**Mrs. Stone:** Recorded vote, please.

**The Chairperson:** Recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

\* (16:50)

Order. Order. Order.

The hour provided for the ringing of the division bells has expired. I am directing that the bells be turned off and the committee proceed to the vote.

The question before the committee is clause 1, Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

*A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Ayes 29, Nays 17.*

**The Chairperson:** Clause 1 is accordingly passed.

\* \* \*

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Could you please canvass the committee to see if there is leave to recess and reconvene the House?

**The Chairperson:** Is there leave to recess and reconvene the House?

**An Honourable Member:** Agreed.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

Leave is denied.

Shall clause 2 pass?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

**Mrs. Stone:** Yes, thank you, Chairperson.

So what we've seen over the past couple and a half years since the NDP came into power is they have changed the property tax structure and homeowners are now, as a result, paying the price.

And what we've seen is it was a sloppy rollout a year ago. And so, you know, fine; they didn't want to include the Progressive Conservative education property tax rebate, replace it with their own flat tax credit. But what that really did is it forced more Manitobans and more Manitoba homeowners to pay significantly higher property taxes.

And so after a year, you'd think that the NDP would have learned their lesson, and they haven't. They've had a year to fix the mistakes that they've made, and they've failed to do so. And so what we've seen is Manitoba has the highest property taxes in the entire country. Property taxes have increased by 20 per cent since just last year. According to the latest CPI inflation numbers, property taxes are a big part of the reason why Manitoba does have the highest inflation in the country, at 4.3 per cent. And we can go through every single school division that has jacked up property taxes and mill rates as a result of the decisions that this NDP government has made.

So what we've seen is, in Louis Riel School Division, education property taxes have increased by 43 per cent just since this NDP government came into power. In Seven Oaks School Division, education property taxes have increased by 39 per cent, just since this NDP government came into power. Pembina Trails School Division, property taxes have increased by 38 per cent, just since this NDP came into power.

And so why is that, Chairperson? The reason that Manitoba homeowners are significantly paying higher education property taxes is because decisions that the Minister of Education made. And I know she's heckling me here in committee because she doesn't want Manitobans to know the truth. And that's—they removed all the guardrails protecting homeowners. They removed the 50 per cent education property tax rebate that took into—

**The Chairperson:** Order. Order.

Comments have to be directed to clause 2, and there's nothing about property taxes in clause 2.

**Mrs. Stone:** This goes to the point that this NDP government continues to raise taxes on Manitoba through The Income Tax Act, which is part 1 of the BITSA bill. And we've seen time and time again that this NDP government continues to take taxes from Manitobans. They're taking taxes from Manitoba homeowners. They're taking taxes from all Manitobans through income tax changes.

And as I spoke about extensively through the first clause, this NDP government has cancelled indexation, being the only government in Canada, the only minister in Canada, the only premier in Canada that does not have indexation on Manitoba's income taxes. And that's really an unfortunate thing for Manitoba families, because this NDP government continues to take taxes from them in other ways, like the education

property tax grab. They removed all the guardrails protecting homeowners, and now Manitoba homeowners—

**The Chairperson:** Order.

There's nothing about education property taxes in clause 2.

I could read clause 2 for the group if we would like.

**An Honourable Member:** Sure.

**The Chairperson:** Two point–2(1), Clause (a) of the description of C in the formula in subsection 4.6(13) is replaced with the following: (a)  $B \times .108$ —*[interjection]*

Sorry, I'll have to recognize—the honourable Government House Leader.

**MLA Fontaine:** Can you please canvass the committee to see if there is leave to recess and to reconvene the House?

**The Chairperson:** Is there leave from the committee to leave—recess committee and reconvene the House? *[Agreed]*

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker. Committee is in recess.

\* (17:00)

#### IN SESSION

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House for leave to sit past the usual hour of adjournment to consider the remaining stages of Bill 53, specifically, Committee of the Whole and concurrence and third reading, and for the Chairperson and/or Speaker to be authorized to interrupt the debate, but can you just extend it until 6 p.m. at this point?

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to extend to 6 p.m. as requested? *[Agreed]*

So now we'll continue with Bill 53 and Committee of the Whole.

Call in the Deputy.

#### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

*(Continued)*

**The Chairperson (Tyler Blashko):** Order.

Would the committee please come to order.

Committee of the Whole is reconvening to consider clause by clause of Bill 53, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act.

We are currently on clause 2.

Shall clause 2 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

#### Recorded Vote

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Recorded vote.

**The Chairperson:** Recorded vote has been requested.

Call in the members.

\* (17:40)

Order.

The question before the committee is clause 2 of Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

\* (17:50)

*A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Ayes 41, Nays 0.*

**The Chairperson:** The clause is accordingly passed.

\* \* \*

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Can you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to recess and reconvene the House?

**The Chairperson:** Is there leave to recess and to reconvene the House? *[Agreed]*

Committee recess.

Call in the Speaker.

#### IN SESSION

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House for leave to sit past the usual hour of adjournment to consider the remaining stages of Bill 53, specifically, Committee of the Whole and concurrence and third reading, and for the Chairperson or the Speaker to be authorized to interrupt debate at 7 p.m. and immediately put all remaining questions without further debate or amendment.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to sit past the usual hour of adjournment to consider the remaining stages of Bill 53, specifically Committee of the Whole and concurrence and third reading, and for the Chairperson and/or Speaker to be authorized to interrupt debate at 7 p.m. and immediately put all remaining questions without further debate or amendment?

Is there leave?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Speaker:** Leave has been denied.

**MLA Fontaine:** Okay, let's try this again.

Can you please canvass the House for leave to sit past the usual hour of adjournment to consider all remaining stages of Bill 53, specifically, Committee of the Whole and concurrence and third reading, until 7 p.m.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to sit past the usual hour of adjournment to consider the remaining stages of Bill 53, specifically, Committee of the Whole and concurrence and third reading, until 7 p.m.?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Leave has been granted.

So now we'll go back into Committee of the Whole.

Call in the Deputy.

#### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

#### Bill 53—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 *(Continued)*

**The Chairperson (Tyler Blashko):** Order.

Will the committee come to order.

The Committee of the Whole has been convened to consider clause by clause for Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. I will inform members of the committee that for the remainder of the evening, we will not have ASL interpretation.

We just passed clause 2 and we will be moving on to clause 3.

Shall clause 3 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** I just have a couple quick questions for the minister on this one. If the minister could just inform us about the—how he arrived at the \$1-million number and how many homes are above that amount?

\* (18:00)

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** To the question, 1,750 properties would have their benefits reduced as a result of this change.

**Mrs. Stone:** So, as we know, property values are behind assessed values, so with next year being a general assessment year, property values are ahead of when assessments come. So has the minister done an analysis of how many more homes could possibly be bumped into that next level once a assessment year—a general assessment year comes next year?

So essentially what I'm asking—so the minister indicated that as of right now, it's 750 or 715 properties he indicated. Next year is a general assessment you—year, property values are increasing, so has he or his department done an analysis of how many more homes will be included in that over-a-million-dollar range next year?

**MLA Sala:** At this point, it would be just purely speculative. We don't know what's going to happen in that reassessment, and so I think it's fair to say that given this stuff happens every two years, the values would, of course, in some cases go up, but remain relatively similar.

**Mrs. Stone:** And sorry, just going back to my previous question, I had asked how the minister arrived at \$1 million.

So it was kind of a two questions in one—asked how many homes were over that million dollars, but I'm also very curious of why a million dollars? Why not a different amount and what the analysis was that he and his department took in order to arrive at that million-dollar number?

**MLA Sala:** We wanted to make sure that we brought more help to families that needed it. Again, for years, Manitobans has had a government that was not focused on responding to these affordability challenges and so this policy reflects our focus on supporting families that need that help.

And we're proud to be raising these Education Property Tax Credits for families across the province. We're seeing bigger cheques go out than ever before, helping more families than ever before and we know how important that is right now.

**The Chairperson:** Seeing no further questions, clause 3—pass.

Shall clause 4 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

**Mrs. Stone:** So what we saw last year when the NDP cancelled the education property tax rebate and brought in their own flat credit, they left out cottage owners, they left out small-business owners from being able to claim that rebate.

So what this minister has now done is he's clarified within that expulsion, mobile homes as well. So as we know, a lot of individuals use mobile homes or trailer homes as part of a secondary residence, perhaps a cottage, perhaps another place to go and spend their time throughout the year. And so this is just another example of the NDP government trying to put the burden of school taxes and education property taxes on homeowners.

And it's really unfortunate, as we saw across the year—throughout the year, that individuals have come forward saying that they are paying a large part of the tax on their secondary properties.

\* (18:10)

You know, we look at examples of the RM of Victoria Beach, where cottage owners are paying incredibly unfair and high, high school taxes when it—when you look at per student population. And so, really, what this minister has done is he's shifting the tax burden and he's shifting the responsibility onto those individuals. And, again, we're seeing it in—within this clause within BITSA.

And so what homeowners and property owners are now experiencing are the highest education property taxes in the entire country. This has led to significantly higher inflation. Manitoba now has the highest inflation in the country at 4.3 per cent. And so by the minister now including mobile homes on secondary properties as part of this exclusion, he's again just shifting the blame. He's shifting the burden and the blame onto school divisions and onto property owners as well, rather than funding school divisions adequately.

And so our former PC plan knew that homeowners—this wasn't sustainable for homeowners and property owners, which is exactly why the former PC government brought in the 50 per cent education

property tax rebate. It's exactly why the former PC government put in a 2 per cent cap on school divisions for increasing their mill rates and skyrocketing mill rates and school taxes. And it's exactly why the PC government was on its path to create a fair and sustainable and equitable education funding formula.

This is something that school divisions are asking for. This isn't just our PC team and just Manitobans are asking for this. School divisions and superintendents across the province are asking for this.

And so rather than the NDP—you know, they've had a year to fix their mistake. They made a mistake last year with their rollout. It was very sloppy. They cancelled and got rid of all the guardrails protecting property owners across the province. And in doing so, property owners are now paying the price for that.

So, okay, last year it was sloppy. This year, they've just dug in their heels more. And by now including mobile homes as part of that expulsion for the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit, it's really, again, just placing more of the burden, more of the tax burden on Manitoba property owners.

So I ask the minister: Why does he continue to place additional burden on property owners across the province of Manitoba?

**MLA Sala:** I think it's important just to start out by speaking to the impacts on school divisions that we saw for many years under the PCs with education cuts, zeros given to divisions for years. And that had a massive consequence which we're, of course—we know really set a lot of school divisions back and set a lot of students back.

And I think it's very important to just highlight here on the record that, finally, Manitobans have a government that is actually focused on making the investments that need to be made, and we're investing in education beyond the rate of inflation, and that's after many years, again, of serious cuts to schools, which the member opposite, again, is part of a team that was responsible for that.

As it relates specifically to mobile homes, one thing that we had heard last year was that there were some gaps there in ensuring that mobile home owners were—would be able to get access to the HATC in advance like homeowners who own single detached homes, and so we did make a change that is going to help them to make sure that they can get that benefit on their actual property tax bill.

So the work we're doing is, I think, thing—moving things ahead and ensuring that mobile homeowners get those benefits on the front end like other homeowners, and we're proud to be making those changes. And, again, similarly, on the renter tax credit side as well, as we've spoken to, we're not only working to ensure that homeowners and mobile homeowners get those cheques in advance or on their property tax bill, but we're also making sure that renters get their—that credit in advance as well.

And so, proud to be doing that work because we know, again, Manitobans are continuing to face those affordability struggles and we want to make sure we give them as much help as possible on the front end.

**Mrs. Stone:** And we know, and the numbers show, that this NDP government isn't funding school divisions nearly to the levels that the former PC government funded. The PC government brought in historic levels of education funding while still protecting homeowners, and unfortunately, this NDP government has done neither.

They haven't funded school divisions to the rate of inflation, and they've placed the entire burden on homeowners and property owners across the province, and that's what we're seeing. And we're hearing from the minister's constituents. We're hearing from constituents from other members across the way that are saying that they cannot continue to pay the burden of school division funding. It's just not sustainable.

This is exactly why school divisions, parents and families are calling for a fair and sustainable education provincial funding model. It's because placing the entire burden on homeowners and property owners is not sustainable into the long term. And we've seen that last year. We're seeing it again as school divisions are increasing by double digits right onto the backs of homeowners.

So we do need to fund education. That is absolutely true. We need to fund it, but it needs to be funded in a way that is fair and sustainable and equitable across school divisions and to the needs of the students, and that is just not happening right now. And it's certainly not sustainable to continue to place the financial burden on homeowners across the province.

A 43 per cent increase in school taxes in the Louis Riel School Division since just this NDP came into power is not sustainable; a 39 per cent increase in Seven Oaks since the NDP came into power is not sustainable; 37 per cent in Pembina Trails is not sustainable.

And that's all happened because this NDP government has failed to fund education to inflation, and it's failed to keep guardrails in place so homeowners aren't paying the burden.

And so can the minister please explain why he continues to place a financial burden on Manitoba property owners? We saw last year in Winnipeg, 55 per cent of property owners in Winnipeg are worse off thanks to this NDP government and thanks to the decisions that they made in last year's budget, and they're doing it again.

So can the minister please explain and defend why he's okay with 55 per cent of property owners in Winnipeg paying more under his decisions?

**MLA Sala:** The premise is wrong, that the member is putting forward. She knows in her own constituency that more than nine out of 10 people are paying less as a result of our Education Property Tax Credit than they were under the scheme that was in place under her former government. Just let that sit for a second.

So she sits here in the House and makes these types of comments while knowing that people in her community have a bunch more money in their pocket because of the approach that we've brought to bear. So the majority of people or many people within her community, many homeowners, have seen their education property tax bill wiped entirely.

So, you know, we're hearing information being brought forward here that does not reflect the reality that people in her own community feel and see and are seeing when they're opening their tax bills. They're doing much, much better under our NDP government's policy. And across the province, people are getting bigger cheques than they've ever received before.

\* (18:20)

So we need to really, I think, do better in this House to speak accurately about what we're seeing across the province. What we are seeing is Manitobans getting more money in their pockets as a result of our policy, and that is especially true in the member's constituency.

**Mrs. Stone:** As I mentioned in my earlier comments, the numbers tell a very different story than what the minister is trying to portray. But what's even more concerning is this minister is entirely missing the point, and the point is that property values continue to rise—there's a general assessment next year—and there's no guardrails to protect homeowners, especially if this

government is not going to fund school divisions to their needs and to the rate of inflation.

And what the point that the minister is missing is that his band-aid solutions of just increases of \$100 year after year is not going to solve the problem that exists today. And that's—the point is that school divisions are not being funded appropriately; they're not being funded properly to their needs; they're not being funded to inflation, and that homeowners and property owners are paying the brunt.

And this isn't going to be fixed by just \$100 this year and \$100 next year because the point that this minister is missing is that property values are increasing, that there is, again, going to be a general assessment next year, which is going to force homeowners to continue to pay higher school taxes and higher education property taxes, and he continues to miss the point that his band-aid solutions are not going to solve this problem. Homeowners and property owners are saying this is not sustainable. The only thing that is going to solve this issue is if school divisions are funded properly and to inflation and that homeowners are protected from skyrocketing education property taxes. That is the only way that is going to fix the situation that we are in today because of the situation that this NDP government has created.

So does the minister not understand that this problem is going to continue until Manitoba comes up with a fair and sustainable, equitable funding formula and that homeowners and property owners will be protected from skyrocketing school taxes? Does he understand that, yes or no?

**MLA Sala:** I'm going to put it in, I think, the clearest terms possible for the member. During their tenure, funding for schools was below population and inflation; therefore, they were cutting schools and school divisions. During our government's tenure, we're funding above population and inflation; therefore, we're funding increases to school divisions across the province.

Now, for many years—while the member wants to skate over this—for many years, those cuts to school divisions had significant impacts, which we're still seeing today. And, unfortunately, while the member again wants to gloss over her party's record and the damage and impacts that their policies and decisions had on Manitoban schools, on teachers, on students, that has had a significant impact.

Now our government has responded to that by ensuring that we bring proper funding to bear above

inflation, and it includes, of course, those population increases. So we are doing that important work of finally funding school divisions above inflation, beyond—inclusive of population growth. And while we do that, we're putting more money in Manitobans' pockets than ever before with education property tax credits that started at \$1,500.

Again, we hear the members talk about this, you know, they like to frame it as tiny increases. I don't think the average Manitoban sees a \$1,500 cheque, and then a \$1,600 cheque and then a \$1,700 cheque as small money. This is very significant increase in the amount of benefits that Manitobans are receiving. We've gone a long way to reduce the education property tax burden for people across the province, and, again, it's inconvenient for the member, but nine out of 10 residents of her community, homeowners in her community, are better off thanks to the NDP government.

**Mrs. Stone:** Why has the minister specifically targeted mobile homes within this clause in his BITSA bill? Why mobile homes that often seniors have as a secondary property, you know, individuals use as a secondary property? Like, we're not talking about multimillion-dollar cabins here; we're talking about mobile homes. So why is this minister choosing to target them to not receive the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit?

**MLA Sala:** As I mentioned earlier, we're doing the important work of ensuring that mobile homeowners are included as part of those groups of Manitobans that will get the benefit of the education property tax bill on their property tax bill.

And so what this change is, is ensuring that mobile homeowners will get that benefit on the front end, just like other homeowners across the province. We think that's an important step ahead to make sure that Manitobans in mobile homes can get that help when they get their property tax bill.

**The Chairperson:** Seeing no further questions, is the House ready for the question? Oh, sorry. Committee.

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**The Chairperson:** Clause 4—pass.

Shall clause 5 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

**Recorded Vote**

**Mrs. Stone:** A recorded vote.

**The Chairperson:** Recorded vote has been requested. Please call in the members.

\* (18:50)

Order.

The question before the committee is clause 5 of Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

*A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Ayes 33, Nays 0.*

**The Chairperson:** Clause 5 is accordingly passed.

\* \* \*

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Can you please canvass the committee to see if there is leave to recess and reconvene the House?

**The Chairperson:** Is there leave to recess and reconvene the House? [*Agreed*]

Committee recess and call in the Speaker.

**IN SESSION**

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Could you please canvass the House to sit—can you please canvass the House to sit—for leave to sit past the usual hour of adjournment to consider the remaining stages of Bill 53, specifically Committee of the Whole and concurrence and third reading, and for the Chairperson and/or Speaker to be authorized to interrupt debate at one—at 12 a.m. and immediately put all remaining questions without further debate or adjournment and with no recorded votes allowed after midnight? [*interjection*]

**The Speaker:** The Honourable Government House Leader.

**MLA Fontaine:** And immediately put all remaining questions without further debate or amendment and with no recorded votes after midnight.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave for the House to sit past the usual hour of adjournment to consider the remaining stages of Bill 53, specifically Committee of the Whole and concurrence and third reading, and for the Chairperson and/or Speaker to be authorized to interrupt debate at 12 a.m. and immediately put all remaining questions without further debate or amendment and with no recorded votes allowed after midnight?

Is there leave?

**An Honourable Member:** Agreed.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Speaker:** Leave has been denied.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** Could you please canvass the House for leave to sit past the usual hour of adjournment to consider the remaining stages of Bill 53, specifically Committee of the Whole and concurrence of—and third reading, and for the Chairperson and/or Speaker to be authorized to interrupt debate at 8 p.m.?

**The Speaker:** So is there leave for the House to sit past the usual hour of adjournment to consider the remaining stages of Bill 53, specifically Committee of the Whole, concurrence and third reading, and for the Chairperson and/or Speaker to be authorized to interrupt debate at 8 p.m.?

Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

So, then, we will now go back into Committee of the Whole to deal with Bill 53.

Call in the Deputy.

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**Bill 53—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026**  
(*Continued*)

\* (19:00)

**The Chairperson (Tyler Blashko):** Order.

Committee of the Whole is resuming consideration of all clauses for Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. We just passed clause 5.

Clause 6—pass.

Shall clause 7 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** PC—there is PC initiatives over the years have been instrumental in making Manitoba a prime destination for the entertainment sector and the film and industry—film industry sector. Previous PC government introduced and doubled one of North America's most competitive tax credits for film and video productions and included an additional tax credit for rural producers.

So I'm just wondering if the minister, on these changes that he had—has brought in, that could add a significant amount of red tape for the film industry. Did the minister consult with the film industry and, if so, who did he consult with?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** I'm happy to share that these amendments that we're making to the credit modernize the application process. They'll create efficiencies for producers. We also know that they're proposing—or this will reduce financing costs, which will help to make Manitoba a more competitive place to film; will create the guard-rails to safeguard against fraud and give Manitoba companies the leverage needed to negotiate better deals with co-production partners.

So we feel strongly that these modifications make Manitoba into a much more attractive place to film and create an environment that fosters the success of Manitoba companies. Proud to be doing this work and ultimately, this is a lot of red tape reduction that we see reflected in these changes, and I'd like to think that the member would be supportive of that.

**Mrs. Stone:** So can the minister explain how requiring productions to file notices within 30 days of principal photography or risk losing eligibility for major expenses will reduce red tape for the film industry, and how will that help Manitoba compete for fast-moving productions?

**MLA Sala:** Can I just clarify, is the member asking about the new requirement to pre-certify?

**Mrs. Stone:** I'm referring to seven point—sorry, one sec—7.7(1.3) Notice of intention to claim tax credit and filing 30 days after principal photography for the production begins. So, 7.7 (1.3) Notice of intention to claim tax credit.

**MLA Sala:** So this is about in an environment where we have an unlimited credit, we want to ensure that, to whatever extent possible, we have some line of sight on what's coming. The industry, as we understand it, knows this is important and are supportive of that.

And, again, this is about just ensuring that we can continue to do this good work of supporting the growth of the film sector in Manitoba, and this will ensure government has some sense of the likely spend in future years and gives us a line of sight on that so we can continue to do this important work of supporting growth in this sector.

**Mrs. Stone:** So, based on that last answer that the minister provided, how is the minister—how will the minister ensure certainty in tax credit eligibility? Certainty is one of—uncertainty, sorry—is one of the fastest ways to drive investment out of the film industry and into competing jurisdictions like Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario, and so, you know, understand and recognize that the minister is trying to add some accountability here, which I do agree with, but also curious how they ensure that the film industry has some certainty in accessing those tax credits.

\* (19:10)

**MLA Sala:** So, to be clear, the changes propose absolutely no modifications or changes to eligibility questions. This is just something that simply, again, will allow us to forecast the cost of the tax credit, which allows us to continue to be a good partner with industry and ensure that this credit continues to be sustainable going forward. So this is simply a part of that process.

Again, our understanding through Manitoba Film is that this is something that the industry understands and are happy to be, again, partners in, and this is just about better forecasting. And, hopefully, the member understands the importance, again, with an unlimited credit, why forecasting is important to government being able to do the important work of understanding its cost structure in future years.

**Mrs. Stone:** So going back to a previous question of whether the minister consulted with the film industry on these changes and if the film industry had any concerns, so I'm curious if the minister consulted with Manitoba producers, crews and unions like the International Cinematographers Guild before introducing these changes.

**MLA Sala:** Yes, so Manitoba Film and Music did a lot of consultation leading up to these recommendations that they made.

And, again, the recommendations we're—that we're discussing here are about moving Manitoba forward, reducing red tape and ensuring that we can continue to have growth in this really important sector here in Manitoba.

**Mrs. Stone:** Can the minister guarantee that no current or planned productions will be cancelled, delayed or relocated because of the new compliance burdens that his government is now forcing onto the film industry?

**MLA Sala:** I appreciate that, honourable Chair. So, again, the member seems to be misunderstanding. This is about red tape reduction. And these are changes that are going to help to create efficiencies for producers and film companies. It's going to promise to reduce their financing costs. And we know that these are recommendations, again, that have been brought forward by Manitoba Film and Sound within the goal of making Manitoba into a more competitive place to film.

So we want to ensure, again, this is a fantastic economic sector for Manitoba, lots of jobs in this specific sector, and we want to continue to see growth here. We know that's important. And what we're doing with these changes is we're continuing to improve access to these credits and we're continuing to support more growth in this sector. It's not as was characterized. This is about reducing red tape.

**The Chairperson:** See no further questions, clause 7—pass; clause 8—pass; clause 9—pass; clause 10—pass.

Shall clause 11 pass?

**An Honourable Member:** Pass.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

**Mrs. Stone:** So, throughout this clause, this minister has added a significant amount of red tape, such as requiring productions to file notices within 30 days, requiring various certifications, creating a significant amount of uncertainty within the film industry as to whether they can access the tax credit and certainly increasing new compliance burdens. And this could—and could possibly drive investment out of the province of Manitoba.

You know, Manitoba, over the past number of years, and particularly under the former PC government, has expanded the film industry and expanded the number of large-scale—small-scale and also large-scale productions that have taken place within this province. There's been some significant investment in new facilities, specifically for the film industry, such as one that was opened in Niverville.

And so we've really seen that this tax credit that the PCs have brought in and really made it a North American, renowned type of tax credit is being diluted by this NDP government. And film companies and the film industry has come to Manitoba because of the film credit that exists, because of the film credit that exists today.

And, unfortunately, this minister is changing a lot of why productions are coming into Manitoba, and he's changing that through additional red tape, through additional compliance burdens that is just going to drive investment out of the province.

So can the minister please explain why he has not consulted with the film industry on these changes of additional red tape for film production companies?

**MLA Sala:** You know, Chair, it's difficult to sit here and listen to what the member is attempting to put on the record, and, frankly, it's just outright—it's not an accurate reflection, certainly, of what she has before her in terms of the changes that are being brought to bear.

And I'll say it's insulting to the work that Manitoba Film and Music is doing. They've consulted extensively with industry through surveys, through meetings, and these proposed changes respond directly to challenges that have been highlighted by producers, administrators and stakeholders through that process.

So sitting here and repeatedly stating that we're adding red tape when she knows that that is not actually what we're proposing here might make for a, you know, a clip that she can put online, but it doesn't bode well for her credibility. That is not accurate.

We're doing the work, again, reducing red tape; this is responsive directly to what the industry told Manitoba Film and Music. We're proud to listen to the experts and the wonderful people who work there, those civil servants who are doing that great work of supporting our film industry and sector in Manitoba.

And this response to what they were told, again, through meetings and surveys, extensive consultation, that the sector needed to continue to move forward. And I think that's something that, again, mischaracterizing that for political benefit when we're talking about good work that was done by civil servants to try to move Manitoba forward, I don't think is right.

So, again, we're proud to be bringing these changes in that are responsive to what the sector wants to see so we can continue to see more growth in our film sector.

**The Chairperson:** Seeing no further questions, shall clause 11 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

### Recorded Vote

**Mrs. Stone:** A recorded vote, please.

**The Chairperson:** Recorded vote has been requested, call in the members.

\* (19:50)

Order.

The question before the committee is clause 11 of Bill 53.

*A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Ayes 28, Nays 12.*

**The Chairperson:** Clause 11 is accordingly passed.

\* \* \*

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Could you please canvass the committee to see if there is leave to recess and to reconvene the House?

**The Chairperson:** Is there leave to recess and to reconvene the House? *[Agreed]*

Committee recess and call in the Speaker.

### IN SESSION

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Okay. Let's try this again.

Could you please canvass the House for leave to sit past the usual hour of adjournment to consider the remaining stages of Bill 53, specifically the Committee of the Whole and concurrence and third reading, and for the Chairperson and/or Speaker to be authorized to interrupt debate at 12 a.m. and immediately put all remaining questions without further debate or amendment? No recorded votes will be allowed on any question after midnight with the exception of the question on concurrence and third reading of Bill 53, and on that question the bells shall ring for no longer than five minutes.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave for the House to sit past the usual hour of adjournment to consider the remaining stages of Bill 43, specifically Committee of the Whole and concurrence and third reading, and for the Chairperson and/or Speaker to be authorized to interrupt debate at 12 a.m. and immediately put all remaining questions without further debate or amendment? No recorded votes will be allowed on any question after midnight with the exception of the question on concurrence and third reading of Bill 53,

and on that question the bells shall ring for no longer than five minutes.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

We will now resume consideration of Bill 53 in concurrence—in Committee of the Whole.

The honourable Deputy Speaker will please take the Chair.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

#### Bill 53—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Continued)

**The Chairperson (Tyler Blashko):** Order.

Will the committee reconvene to consider clause by clause of Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

We are now on clause 12.

Clause 12—pass; clause 13—pass; clause 14—pass; clause 15—pass; clause 16—pass; clause 17—pass.

\* (20:00)

Shall clause 18 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Chairperson:** Clause 18 is—oh. There's a no?

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** So throughout this clause, the minister and the NDP government are again picking and choosing winners and losers here in Manitoba. This clause specifically exempts restaurants, bakeries from the PST prepared meal tax cut.

By doing this, what they're doing—this NDP government is doing, is creating competition in between large grocery chains and small-run restaurants. So what this is doing is it's just creating a tax shift, a tax shift and an unfair competitive advantage to large-scale grocery chains versus small restaurants.

So the question I have for the minister is why is his boss, the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Kinew), refusing to meet with Restaurants Canada?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** So in relation to, you know, the question of whether or not we had an opportunity to meet with Restaurants Canada, the answer to that is yes. I met with Restaurants Canada myself, along with our local Restaurant Association here in Manitoba. Our team in Finance—my chief of staff—had another meeting with

Restaurants Canada again. And we're proud to work with them, to be transparent and to ensure that they're part of the conversation.

Last year, during a number of conversations we had with the Restaurant Association here in Manitoba, along with Restaurants Canada, one of the things that were—was identified was concerns around security and safety. And we were strongly requested to bring forward a security rebate or some support that would help restaurants to cover some of the costs associated with installing security infrastructure. And we were very proud to work with them, along with other parts of our business community, to bring that forward.

But in a large part, it was really Restaurants Canada and our local restaurant association that did a lot of, I think, really important advocacy to identify why this was important. We listened to them and they were a big part of that.

So our government is a listening government. We're proud to be a listening government. We responded to the request that they advocated for last year and I think in a big way with a very significant security rebate program that was very well received and continues to be well received.

So I think when it comes to responding to the needs of the community and the restaurant sector here in Manitoba, we're very responsive. We're always happy to meet and to continue those conversations. It's an open-door policy in my office, and I know that goes for our entire government, and we are absolutely happy to continue meeting with them.

In relation to the—you know, what we've brought forward here in this BITSA bill, this is about helping Manitobans where they're buying their groceries, and so that is in any store across the province. Whether it's a larger grocery store, a convenience store, any single store within Manitoba that sells groceries is going to have the PST removed from their groceries.

So that, I think, is—you know, is an important response right now with Manitobans facing continued affordability challenges. We're proud of the work that we're doing to respond to those challenges and this is an important step forward.

So, again, we're looking for the members opposite to get on board and bring these savings to Manitobans on July 1.

**Mrs. Stone:** So what we've seen in this BITSA bill is an NDP government that is picking and choosing winners and losers. And as to the minister's comment

about an open-door policy, Restaurants Canada would have a very different response to that, because what they've said is this Premier (Mr. Kinew) is refusing to meet with them. Restaurants contribute almost \$4 billion in annual sales, more than 42,000 jobs across the province and 40 per cent held by youth.

Youth unemployment skyrocketed to 14 per cent earlier this year under this NDP government and what this minister and the NDP want to do, is they want to shift customers away from small businesses here in Manitoba. What they've done is they have created a system again and again, just like with the Manitoba jobs agreement, where they're picking and choosing winners and losers and what this policy and what this clause in BITSA has done, is it's created a clear and unjustifiable imbalance. It applies different tax treatment to identical products based solely on where they are purchased and, in doing so, just shifts demand across the food marketplace.

So that is—that's directly from Restaurants Canada. They have come out and they've said that this Premier is refusing to meet with them despite the fact that they contribute \$4 billion to our local economy, despite the fact that they contribute 42,000 jobs across the province. These are not small numbers. This is an industry that provides significant economic value to the province of Manitoba.

And by this Premier and NDP government refusing to meet with them, this Premier is refusing to meet with Restaurants Canada and the restaurants industry in Manitoba. *[interjection]*

And I know the minister is heckling me right now, but I'm talking about the Premier. The Premier has refused to meet with them. That is what Restaurants Canada has said.

So my question earlier—*[interjection]*

**The Chairperson:** Order.

**Mrs. Stone:**—was very, very clear to this minister: Why is his boss, the Premier of Manitoba, refusing to meet with Restaurants Canada? And if they do—*[interjection]*

**The Chairperson:** Order.

**Mrs. Stone:**—have such an open-door policy, then when can Restaurants Canada expect a meeting with the Premier? And if this minister could provide a time and a date, because I know Restaurants Canada is watching right now.

Thank you.

**MLA Sala:** As we've already stated clearly, we are happy to meet with Restaurants Canada at any point and we look forward to setting up a meeting at any point that they'd like to further discuss this.

And we're going to continue working with them, collaboratively, as we have in the past, where we brought forward security rebate that was responsive to concerns that they'd identified. And we're going to keep working with them and keep an open door, and we look forward to future conversations with Restaurants Canada whenever they are wanting to have that discussion.

**Mrs. Stone:** They do want to have this discussion. They have asked for the meeting with the Premier (Mr. Kinew), and the Premier is denying them that meeting. That is coming directly from them.

My question was: When can they expect a meeting with the Premier? And I know the minister wants to talk down to me and I know his teammates on that side of the House are wanting to shut—shout me down because they don't like what they're hearing because the reality is, is they have left out small businesses in Manitoba from this tax policy change and the result of that is creating a system of winners and losers in the province of Manitoba.

Restaurants in Manitoba want to be treated fairly, and I know they don't want to hear that, but that is the reality and they should be treated fairly. And so what Restaurants Canada is asking for today is when they can expect a meeting with the Premier rather than this Premier just continuously shutting the door on them.

**MLA Sala:** We look forward to meeting with Restaurants Canada when they're able and wanting to have that meeting.

**Mrs. Stone:** So throughout this policy of picking and choosing winners and losers, what this minister and this Premier and NDP government have essentially done is they've said you can buy a prepared meal at a grocery store PST tax exempt, but you cannot buy that same prepared meal at a restaurant. That is picking and choosing winners and losers. And time and time again, what we're seeing, is we're seeing this NDP government come out with a flashy announcement without thinking through the consequences.

\* (20:10)

And if they really, truly wanted to make life more affordable for Manitobans, then they would recognize and they would meet and they would discuss with industry how they can make that possible, rather than

not thinking through the legislation that they're bringing forward.

Because had they thought this through, had they consulted with the restaurants industry, then we could be seeing a very different BITSA bill. But what they've done is they've rushed this BITSA bill through. This is exactly why we have said that the NDP government needs more time to consult with more Manitobans—more affordability measures.

So considering this bill, and this PST junk food tax cut is the only affordability measure contained in this budget, and they haven't even gotten that right, because what they've done is they have left out an industry that contributes \$3.5 billion to the province of Manitoba. *[interjection]*

And I know the minister is trying to shut me down because he does not like this, because he has been embarrassed by this policy proposal that he's brought forward. He is embarrassed by a BITSA bill that does not do enough for Manitobans because Manitobans need more affordability measures.

So, again, I ask the minister: Why he has allowed a PST reduction on prepared food at one industry—grocery stores—but not another? Why has he picked and chosen winners and losers in the province of Manitoba?

**MLA Sala:** Honourable Chair, we could not be prouder of this BITSA bill. We could not be prouder. We know how important it is. We know how important it is to bring these savings to Manitobans as quickly as possible.

Of course, we just heard the critic state that this PST removal off all groceries in Manitoba is, according to her and her team, the only affordability item. Of course, it's important on the record here to state that that is not accurate. This very BITSA bill that we're debating tonight contains two other very important affordability measures, which is increasing the size of the renters tax credit; it also proposes to increase the size of the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit, which is a very important increase, as well, that's going to help homeowners reduce their costs of owning a home.

Beyond that, of course, our recent budget proposed to make child care free for the lowest income families in Manitoba and, of course, to take away the cost of transit, public transportation, for youth in Manitoba. Those are significant commitments that are going to help save Manitobans money across the province.

And that's built off a number of other very important affordability policies that we've brought in, including a broad middle-class tax cut, an increase to the basic personal exemption, changes to brackets that are keeping more money in people's pockets, a hydro rate freeze, a continued 10 per cent cut to the fuel tax. We are doing the work of making life more affordable, and this BITSA bill builds on that good work that we've done to date.

**Mrs. Stone:** Will the minister commit to bringing in another BITSA bill that includes Restaurants Canada in their PST cut?

**MLA Sala:** We commit to continuing to do the important work that we've been doing since the first day we got in this building, which is to focus on the priorities of Manitobans, especially the affordability challenges they're facing.

This bill is an important step forward, bringing targeted relief to help Manitobans when they need it. We ask the members opposite to get on board.

**The Chairperson:** Seeing no further questions, is—shall clause 18 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

#### Voice Vote

**The Chairperson:** All those in favour, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**The Chairperson:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**The Chairperson:** In my mind, the Ayes have it.

Clause 18 is accordingly passed.

\* \* \*

**The Chairperson:** Clause 19—pass.

Shall Clause 20 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

**Mrs. Stone:** Yes, so what this clause does is it specifically calls out restaurants and establishments from being excluded from this NDP's PST cut on prepared food. And as I spoke about earlier in my comments, restaurants provide almost \$4 billion of

economic GDP to this province, 42,000 jobs; a significant number of them are youth.

With Manitoba's youth unemployment rate reaching almost 14 per cent under this NDP government, youth rely on these jobs. They rely on jobs within the restaurant sector after school, during university, to help pay for university tuition. And all this policy has done is it's shifted—it's shifted people into large chain grocery stores rather into small restaurants. And these restaurants are owned by local businesses.

Almost \$4 billion to the local economy, 42,000 jobs. That is not small numbers. And so by this NDP government shifting, they are essentially creating a system of winners and losers. And, unfortunately for Manitoba, 42,000 jobs within the restaurant industry and our small businesses within the restaurant sector here in Manitoba are the losers under this NDP government. They are refusing to expand this out to restaurants. The Premier (Mr. Kinew) is refusing to meet with Restaurants Canada despite the significant amount of economic GDP that they bring into the province of Manitoba.

And we want to keep those restaurants here. We see restaurants closing down. Their revenue margins can be very, very small, if any. A lot of them are family-run; they're trying to keep these restaurants in the family. And this minister, this Premier and this Kinew government are not giving them the same playing space as they are with large chain grocery stores, and that is incredibly unfortunate for the restaurants industry.

The restaurants sector and Restaurants Canada have been very outspoken about the fact that this NDP government is leaving them out at a time when Manitobans are struggling to afford to go to restaurants. So the last thing you think this NDP government would want to do is deter Manitobans from spending money into the economy. And that's exactly what they're doing with this policy.

So can the minister please again explain, while Restaurants Canada is watching today, why he has been so okay with leaving out restaurants and small businesses from his BITSA bill?

**MLA Sala:** We are focused on making life more affordable for families in Manitoba at the grocery store. That's where they buy their groceries; that's where they're feeling the pressures the most. And so we're proud to be responding to that.

Again, this is one measure of a number of important affordability measures that we've brought

forward. For example, our increase of a renters tax credit. That is increasing a tax credit for renters that was cut by the members opposite. They increased taxes on a renter by \$175 with the changes they brought in when they reduced it from \$700 to \$525.

So the BITSA bill that the member fights against here today, along with her colleagues—again, they're fighting against us making life more affordable for renters. We know they don't want to go any higher. We know they want to go back to the \$525 that they brought it to or perhaps even lower. It's a mystery to me why they want to take that position and make life more expensive for renters or why they don't want to help homeowners more with a bigger Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit.

All of these measures together—again, middle-class tax cuts, gas tax reduction—permanent 10 per cent—affordable hydro rates, which we didn't see under the members opposite for years while they did absolutely nothing to build more capacity; they jacked up hydro rates on Manitobans at rates that far exceed what Manitobans are experiencing currently.

And, of course, now we've brought forward these other affordability measures beyond the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit increase, beyond the renters tax credit increase, beyond the proposed PST cut off all groceries. We've also brought in other important proposals in our last budget: free child care for the lowest income families in Manitoba who need that help and, of course, free transit for students across Manitoba. That is going to save hundreds and hundreds of dollars a year for families. So those are very important measures that we brought forward.

Beyond the affordability measures, I'm also proud that we're doing this work while ensuring we bring forward a fiscally responsible approach. The members opposite have brought forward proposals here that have billion-dollar price tags attached to them with no idea about the consequences of their proposal—absolutely reckless approach to proposing fiscal policy.

We know what happens when they're at the reins. We saw that for seven and a half years where we see tax cuts that benefit the very wealthiest in Manitoba while they make cuts to everything else. That's their record. And then, again, on the way out the door, they left Manitobans with a \$2-billion deficit hole to climb out of.

So I'm proud of the work we're doing. I'm proud that we're making life more affordable while we bring forward a fiscally responsible approach.

If we were to do what the critic, what that team is proposing, I can guarantee you, Chair, that we would be looking at credit downgrades in Manitoba. And that's the path that they'd taken us down before they left government with a \$2-billion deficit. They have no ability, apparently, to see the damage that their proposal would create, and, of course, we know they don't care. This is what they did when they were in government. They make changes that create benefits—disproportionate benefits—for a very small number of Manitobans, while they make cuts to everything else and while they bring forward fiscally irresponsible policy and overall framework for managing government. That's the reality that Manitobans saw under their leadership for seven and a half years. It was a fiscal disaster that they left us to clean up.

\* (20:20)

Fortunately, we've now turned the corner, and we just released a budget that now sees Manitoba having the lowest deficit-to-GDP ratio in the entire country.

So this is progress, both fiscally but I think, more importantly, in terms of making life more affordable, there's no question that our team is doing the work. This BITSA bill is an important next step in delivering on that, and, again, we implore the members opposite to get on board.

It is absolutely inconceivable to Manitobans that the opposition is fighting against tax cuts that will save them money. What are they doing? It doesn't honestly—it does not make sense to Manitobans that we've spoken with. We hear this all the time: We have no idea why they're standing against savings. Why are they standing against a tax cut? Maybe we want to learn the answer to that question tonight, honourable Chair. What we do know is this: We need to make sure that Manitobans get this help as soon as possible, and to do that we need to pass BITSA.

So, again, we implore the members opposite, I implore the critic, to support this bill so we can help Manitobans as soon as we can.

**Mrs. Stone:** What consultation did the minister do regarding leaving restaurants out of his PST tax cut? What kind of consultations did he do with the industry, because we're certainly hearing from Restaurants Canada that they do not agree with the proposal that this minister has brought forward.

So did the minister even consult with them?

**MLA Sala:** Yes, we're very proud to have good relationships with both Restaurants Canada and our

Manitoba Restaurant Association. Shaun and Kris—Kris at the federal level, Shaun locally, these are people that we have very strong relationships with.

I'm very happy that we're able to have, again, an open-door policy where we're able to meet, and any time that they want to engage and discuss or express concern, we are there to talk.

And, again, that's going to be the policy going forward, as it's been since we've come into government.

And just to be clear about something: You know what are the main things I've heard, Chair, since coming to this role, from people across Manitoba, in my role as Finance Minister, is the level of surprise and shock they have at having access to a government that they can actually talk to.

I know that every one of my colleagues in Cabinet would probably have something very similar to share. For years, and the members opposite can go out in the field and test this out, the No. 1 thing I've heard is that there's a sense of absolute shock that they can actually reach out to a ministerial office and have somebody get back to them, not only get back to them, eagerly sit down with them to talk. And for seven and a half years, it was a closed-door policy.

So this business of suggesting that somehow we're not engaging or consulting, not only is that ridiculous, it's further—it's preposterous on the basis that they had a closed-door for seven and a half years. So not only Restaurants Canada, not only, again, our Manitoba Restaurant Association, the door's open; we're happy to continue meeting with them, and we will always be happy to continue meeting with them, and, again, as I said earlier, looking forward to my next discussion with Shaun and the team here in Manitoba, and Kris at the Canada level, and the door will always remain open to them and any other stakeholders who want to engage with our government.

**Mrs. Stone:** It's almost comical that the minister could say that with a straight face because industry is saying a very—and telling a very, very different story. We've heard major industries indicate that this Premier (Mr. Kinew) and this minister and this NDP government are not consulting with them on major, major changes that they are making.

The construction industry is a perfect example that was not consulted before a job-killing, forced-unionization jobs agreement was brought in and they have publicly said that they weren't consulted. Numerous construction industry associations have come out and said they weren't consulted. Restaurants Canada has

said that the Premier is shutting his door on them and not consulting with them on this change within BITSA, on PST prepared foods.

Just in the last week alone, those are major, major industries that contribute a significant amount of jobs and economic GDP to the province of Manitoba that have said that this NDP government is not listening, they don't care, and they're not even consulting.

So, quite frankly, this—industries across Manitoba are telling a very different story than what this minister is trying to portray, and they are going on the record publicly, in the media, to indicate that this NDP government is not a listening government, not a caring government and isn't a consulting government. And that is very concerning for industries that contribute so much to the province of Manitoba. And we're talking about industries where the majority of what makes up that industry is small, family-run, local businesses.

When you look at the restaurant industry, when you look at the construction industry, small, locally owned, family-run businesses. That is who this minister is not consulting with. But they provide a significant amount of GDP to the province of Manitoba and a significant—thousands and tens of thousands of jobs to the province of Manitoba and they are not even being consulted. And we're only talking about examples within the past week or two.

So those are two major industries in the past week or two that have said that this minister and this NDP government are not consulting and not listening, and that is very concerning for Manitoba.

So, again, on behalf of Restaurants Canada, I ask: Will Restaurants Canada receive a response to meet with the Premier by tomorrow?

**MLA Sala:** I'll say to our friend Kris Barnier at Restaurants Canada, reach out any time. We're eager to meet with you, and we look forward to the discussion.

**The Chairperson:** Seeing no further questions, shall clause 20 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

**Voice Vote**

**The Chairperson:** All those in favour, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**The Chairperson:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**The Chairperson:** In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

#### Recorded Vote

**Mrs. Stone:** Recorded vote, please.

**The Chairperson:** A recorded vote has been requested, call in the members.

\* (21:20)

Order.

The hour provided for the ringing of the division bells has expired. I am directing that the bells be turned off and the committee proceed to the vote.

The question before the committee is clause 20 of Bill 53. All those in favour in the Chamber, please rise.

*A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Ayes 29, Nays 10.*

The clause is accordingly passed.

\* \* \*

\* (21:30)

Okay, clause 21—pass; clause 22—pass; clause 23—pass; clause 24—pass; clause 25—pass; clause 26—pass; clause 27—pass; clause 28—pass; clause 29—pass; clause 30—pass; clause 31—pass; clause 32—pass; clause 33—pass; clause 34—pass; clause 35—pass; clause 36—pass; clause 37—pass; clause 38—pass; clause 39—pass; clause 40—pass; clause 41—pass; clause 42—pass; clause 43—pass; clause 44—pass; clause 45—pass; clause 46—pass; clause 47—pass; clause 48—pass.

Shall clause 49 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** Yes, reducing the investment in this great building that we sit in here today—I mean, if members look around up at the ceiling, you know, it's only paint in here, but the outside of this building needs major restoration.

And I know we brought in the legislation back under the Pallister government to ensure this building is restored and maintained so it doesn't crumble

around us, much like this NDP government is, and it's reducing the—it's reducing from—[interjection]

**The Chairperson:** Order.

**Mr. Johnson:** —down to \$8 million from \$10 million for investments in this building and ensuring that the foundation is solid. You can see the foundation was dug up around this building and waterproofed—[interjection]

**The Chairperson:** Order.

**Mr. Johnson:** —and that work needs to continue. And I'm just wondering how this minister can justify reducing the investment in this building before it gets to the point of beyond repair.

**MLA Sala:** This represents just a little bit of belt-tightening and we know that, of course, investments in this building are incredibly important. We're proud to continue supporting these investments. This is still a significant investment—\$8 million a year, making sure that we can continue to do good work to making sure that the people's building stays in the beautiful condition that it's in. And should we determine later that there's more funds needed, we will absolutely examine that when that time comes.

For now, we brought this forward as a small belt-tightening initiative and, again, this is part of our broader work of ensuring that we keep a fiscally sustainable path going forward after the PCs left Manitobans a fiscal disaster when they left government.

**Mr. Johnson:** Well, time erodes the investment in this building—\$10 million when this legislation was brought in doesn't buy—buys a lot more than the \$10 million that is being—was put in this last year.

So time itself is eroded—erodes buying power, much like these votes are being eroded from the NDP government, and \$10 million down to \$8 million, that's why this was put into legislation in the first place. Because when the NDP were in government for those 17 years, they didn't put a penny into this building other than resurfacing the Golden Boy, and that is shameful—shameful. The foundations were cracking and infiltrated by water. What we have in Manitoba is what we call frost jacking, and between the stones—water gets in there and it freezes and it cracks the stones. And more water gets in, it freezes and it cracks them even more.

So, if it's a bell curve, does that mean that they're spending not just what time has eroded for buying power, they're also going to be slashing by \$2 million? If there's a substantial need or a fault as they expose

the foundations around this great building, is there will to put in more money when than happens?

**MLA Sala:** Yes, it seems that the only thing eroding here tonight, honourable Chair, is the size of the caucus sitting across from us. Seems to get smaller and smaller.

We, again, we're continuing to make important investments in this beautiful building, the people's building, and we're proud to be doing that: \$8-million investment this year. Again, this small reduction represents just a little bit of belt tightening, and to the members concerned about if there are further issues identified which we need to invest in and respond to, we'll cross that bridge when we get there.

**Mr. Johnson:** Yes, so that's a clear no. And I guess this building—Manitobans' building is going to be—the walls will be falling in and they'll probably be falling in anyway if this NDP government stays in power for another year.

So where is the money going to come from if the building is in need of more repair than the budgeted amount?

**MLA Sala:** Again, honourable Speaker—or honourable Chair, we're proud to be investing in this building—\$8-million investment this year. Small reduction, again representing a little bit of belt tightening and shows our government's focus on fiscal sustainability, something we did not see for seven and a half years under the members opposite.

**Mrs. Stone:** Yes, so this minister has reduced by 20 per cent, \$2 million.

Can the minister please inform the House, in the spirit of transparency and accountability, where that \$2 million is being redirected to?

**MLA Sala:** Well, responding to health-care cuts that were made after many years of the PC government, responding to affordability challenges that Manitobans were left with—unattended to for seven and a half years. It's going into the very important priorities that Manitobans set out for us. We're proud to be making those investments: good jobs, better health care. And we're going to keep taking care of Manitobans each and every day.

**The Chairperson:** Seeing no further questions—oh, the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli.

**Mr. Johnson:** Have you consulted with the trades that are working on the building, that will have to lay people off that have been working here for years, to

try and keep this building as beautiful as it is? Have you consulted at all with the tradespeople and gotten input from them?

**MLA Sala:** Again, we're very pleased to be making an \$8-million investment and ensuring that this building can continue to be the beautiful place it is for the people of Manitoba.

And this is just a small reduction that reflects some belt tightening. And, again, should there be any need down the road where we're identified some kind of additional pressure this year which we need to respond to, we will do so at that time.

**Mrs. Stone:** Yes, so as we know, construction costs continue to go up as various economic, geopolitical pressures continued to be placed on the construction industry and construction inputs and construction products.

So with the minister decreasing the budget for this—within this BITSA bill to \$8 million, what will that mean for the future in terms of restoration projects for the Manitoba Legislature that essentially will cost or could cost Manitoba taxpayers that much more as construction projects continue to skyrocket as this minister is so-called belt tightening within this BITSA bill?

**MLA Sala:** We will continue to ensure this building sees the investments it requires to remain the beautiful building it is.

**Mr. Johnson:** Yes, has the minister consulted with Accommodation Services and were they prepared for this 20 per cent slash in their budget?

**MLA Sala:** Well, we set a budget, and so we are working within and—the Legislative Assembly as we go forward this year. Of course, work will be done to support beautification, restoration of this building.

Again, should more dollars be needed at some point down the road, we will invest as required. For now, again, we're proud to continue investing in this building with an \$8-million investment this year.

**Mrs. Stone:** Is this going to result in any cancellation or suspension or postponement of current contracts as it relates to restoring the people's building?

\* (21:40)

**MLA Sala:** You know, our team is very proud this year to have brought in the largest capital plan of any government in Manitoba's history. We're investing in hospitals; we're investing in schools; we're investing in roads; we're investing in the things that weren't

invested in for a very long period of time under the members opposite.

And we're also investing in the Legislative Building. Very proud to be doing that work. And I can say that we have a \$22-million contingency in place as part of our budget this year. And, if we need to, we will go ahead and appropriate more funds to respond to challenges should they be revealed over the coming year. But, again, proud to be investing in this building, and we know that's important so we can keep this place beautiful for Manitobans.

**Mr. Johnson:** So as these contracts go out, after the 20 per cent slash, will the Manitoba jobs agreement now erode that buying power even more for the contracts that are put out for this building?

**MLA Sala:** The Manitoba jobs agreement only applies to jobs valued over \$50 million. So if the member was paying attention to policy, he would have known that already. This is a \$10-million investment—or, sorry, an \$8-million investment we're making to beautify and make sure the Legislature stays in good condition. And we'll continue to make the investments we need to keep this building looking beautiful for Manitobans.

**Mrs. Stone:** Will this \$2-million reduction and 20 per cent slash result in any layoffs for those that are working on the restoration of this Legislative Building?

**MLA Sala:** No.

**The Chairperson:** Seeing no further questions, is—shall clause 49 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

#### Voice Vote

**The Chairperson:** All those in favour, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**The Chairperson:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**The Chairperson:** In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

#### Recorded Vote

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** A recorded vote, please.

**The Chairperson:** A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

\* (22:20)

Order.

The question before the committee is shall clause 49 of Bill 53 pass?

*A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Ayes 29, Nays 17.*

\* \* \*

**The Chairperson:** [*inaudible*] Thank you—clause 49—pass; clause 50—pass; clause 51—pass.

Shall clause 52 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

**Mrs. Stone:** I have an amendment.

I move, seconded by the member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza),

*THAT Clause 52 of the Bill be amended by adding the following after the proposed subsection 328.2(3):*

#### Limit on tax

**328.2(3.1)** A by-law must not establish an amount or rate of short-term accommodation tax that exceeds 6% of the price paid for the use of the short-term accommodation.

**The Chairperson:** It has been moved by the honourable member for Midland (Mrs. Stone), seconded by the honourable member from Portage la Prairie,

*THAT Clause 52 of the Bill be amended by adding the following after the proposed subsection 328.2(3):*

#### Limit on tax

**328.2(3.1)** A by-law must not establish an amount or rate of short-term accommodation tax that exceeds 6% of the price paid for the use of the short-term accommodation.

The amendment is in order. The floor is open for questions.

**Mrs. Stone:** I just want to explain the intention of this bill. So this—the intention of this amendment, sorry—is to close a gap. So the bill, as it reads right now, allows municipalities to impose a short-term accommodation tax. But what it doesn't address is inconsistencies across municipalities when it comes to a short-term accommodation tax.

So the reason that we selected 6 per cent is it is the hotel accommodation tax that the City of Winnipeg utilizes right now. So in terms of consistency across municipalities, the intent of this amendment is to ensure that a short-term accommodation tax is a—to a

maximum of 6 per cent across all municipalities so that it does ensure consistency across municipalities, across the province of Manitoba. It also allows for municipalities to still bring in a short-term accommodation tax if they wish; however, what we want to avoid is we want to avoid municipalities running away with large-scale, significant accommodation tax increases.

So this is consistent with what the City of Winnipeg already has. It's consistent with what municipalities are looking to do. It still gives that autonomy to municipalities to bring in a short-term accommodation tax if they wish, but it also ensures consistency so that you don't have one municipality bringing in a significant tax increase and another one competing with a lower one. It provides consistency across the entire province.

What we also want to ensure is to avoid significant runaway tax increases on accommodation taxes. We know that tourism is incredibly important to municipalities. We want to drive people into municipalities. We want to encourage investment in the hotel industry, in rentals, because that is what drives our economy. People, when they look at renting—renting a cottage, a home, a facility of some kind, that they are bringing their dollars into that municipality.

So by ensuring that there is a cap of 6 per cent, it does protect tourism in Manitoba. It protects individuals that are looking to come in to different areas and spend their money from significant increases. It protects the industry, also, from having to tax significant—possibly significantly high taxes, those individuals and that industry that choose to invest in those municipalities.

So this is a non-political amendment that we brought forward. As I mentioned, what it does is it essentially provides consistency for what the City of Winnipeg already does, which is a 6 per cent accommodation tax, and it just broadens that out to other municipalities to ensure consistency.

**The Chairperson:** Seeing no further questions, is the committee ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Chairperson:** Shall the amendment pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

### Voice Vote

**The Chairperson:** All those in favour, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**The Chairperson:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**The Chairperson:** In my opinion, the Nays have it.

The amendment is—the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** On division.

**The Chairperson:** On division.

The amendment is accordingly defeated, on division.

\* \* \*

**The Chairperson:** Going back to the original clause: clause 52—pass; clause 53—pass; clause 54—pass; clause 55—pass; clause 56—pass; clause 57—pass.

Shall clause 58 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

**Mrs. Stone:** I have an amendment.

I move, seconded by the member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson),

*THAT Clause 58 of the Bill be amended by adding the following after the proposed subsection 223.3(1):*

#### **Limit on interest rate – debt more than \$2,000,000**

**223.3(1.0.1)** If a school division owes more than a total of \$2,000,000 to one or more institutions described in clause (1)(b), the Lieutenant Governor in Council must not approve the school division to borrow further money under that clause unless the Lieutenant Governor in Council is satisfied that the rate of interest to be paid on the loan is equal to or lower than the rate of interest that would be charged on a loan under clause (1)(a).

#### **Limit on interest rate – debt \$2,000,000 or less**

**223.3(1.0.2)** If a school division owes a total of \$2,000,000 or less to one or more institutions—*[interjection]*

\* (22:30)

**The Chairperson:** Order, please.

**Mrs. Stone:**—described in clause (1)(b),—*[interjection]*

**The Chairperson:** Order.

**Mrs. Stone:** Can people please be respectful, Chairperson?

**The Chairperson:** Order, please. Order.

Because we're reading out—particularly because we're reading out amendments, it's important that many folks working in this room need to hear all the details, so.

**Mrs. Stone:** Thank you. I'll just start over.

*THAT Clause 58 of the Bill be amended by adding the following after the proposed subsection 223.3(1):*

**Limit on interest rate – debt more than \$2,000,000**

**223.3(1.0.1)** If a school division owes more than a total of \$2,000,000 to one or more institutions described in clause (1)(b), the Lieutenant Governor in Council must not approve the school division to borrow further money under that clause unless the Lieutenant Governor in Council is satisfied that the rate of interest to be paid on the loan is equal to or lower than the rate of interest that would be charged under a loan under clause (1)(a).

**Limit on interest rate – debt \$2,000,000 or less**

**223.3(1.0.2)** If a school division owes a total of \$2,000,000 or less to one or more institutions described in clause (1)(b), the Lieutenant Governor in Council must not approve the school division to borrow money under that clause unless the Lieutenant Governor in Council is satisfied that the rate of interest to be paid on any amount borrowed after the school division's debt to such institutions exceeds \$2,000,000 is equal to or lower than the rate of interest that would be charged on a loan under clause (1)(a).

**The Chairperson:** Is there leave to have it considered as written? *[Agreed]*

*THAT Clause 58 of the Bill be amended by adding the following after the proposed subsection 223.3(1):*

**Limit on interest rate – debt more than \$2,000,000**

**223.3(1.0.1)** If a school division owes more than a total of \$2,000,000 to one or more institutions described in clause (1)(b), the Lieutenant Governor in Council must not approve the school division to borrow further money under that clause unless the Lieutenant Governor in Council is satisfied that the rate of interest to be paid on the loan is equal to or lower than the rate of interest that would be charged under a loan under Clause (1)(a).

**Limit on interest rate – debt \$2,000,000 or less**

**223.3(1.0.2)** If a school division owes a total of \$2,000,000 or less to one or more institutions described in clause (1)(b), the Lieutenant Governor in Council must not approve the school division to borrow money under that clause unless the Lieutenant Governor in Council is satisfied that the rate of interest to be paid on any amount borrowed after the school division's debt to such institutions exceeds \$2,000,000 is equal to or lower than the rate of interest that would be charged on a loan under clause (1)(a).

**The Chairperson:** So it has been moved by the honourable member for Midland (Mrs. Stone), seconded by the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson),

*THAT Clause 58 of the Bill—is—amended by adding the following after the proposed subsection—*

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**The Chairperson:** In—the amendment is in order.

The floor is open for questions.

**Mrs. Stone:** I know that the Minister of Education was heckling me before I even got into two sentences of the amendment. So I'll explain the intent of the amendment. And the intent of the amendment is to ensure that when school divisions borrow significant amounts of money, that the interest that they're getting is lower than the interest that the Province would otherwise get.

So since this government is looking to expand the ability for school divisions to significantly borrow on their own, as taxpayers, as ratepayers, as families, parents and homeowners, we want to ensure that the rate that school divisions are borrowing at is a decent rate for them. And right now, we have seen with this minister that she has allowed school divisions to do whatever they want and charge school—families and homeowners significant mill rates, skyrocketing education property taxes.

So what this does is it ensures the rate of borrowing is equal to or lower than what school divisions would otherwise get currently. And had she actually allowed me to read that amendment and maybe listen to it, then she would realize that this is a protection not just for school divisions, because we don't want school divisions to go into significant debt as they're all going into their own rate borrowing or possibly going into their own rate borrowing, as opposed to what the Province could get currently.

So this is a protection for school divisions. It's to ensure that school divisions across Manitoba can get a fair rate for their taxpayers, for their ratepayers, for parents and for families. So quite frankly, this is a very common sense amendment. If the NDP votes against this, what they're saying is that homeowners, families, parents and school divisions could possibly not get a rate that's fair or equal to what they are currently getting. And I think that that would be incredibly fiscally irresponsible.

And I would encourage the NDP to vote in favour of this common sense amendment that would protect school divisions from potentially being taken advantage of with higher rates and higher borrowing, and to ensure that if they are to borrow at over \$2 million, that the rate that they are getting is equal to or lesser than the rate that they would otherwise get.

**The Chairperson:** Seeing no further questions, is the committee ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Chairperson:** Shall the amendment pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

#### Voice Vote

**The Chairperson:** All those in favour, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**The Chairperson:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**The Chairperson:** In my opinion, the Nays have it.

#### Recorded Vote

**Mrs. Stone:** Recorded vote, please.

**The Chairperson:** Recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

\* (23:00)

Order.

The question before the committee—*[interjection]*

Order.

The question before the committee is the amendment to clause 58 of Bill 53, moved by the honourable member for Midland (Mrs. Stone).

*A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Ayes 17, Nays 31.*

**The Chairperson:** The amendment is accordingly defeated.

\* \* \*

**The Chairperson:** So we'll move back to clause 58.

\* (23:10)

Clause 58—pass; clause 59—pass; clause 60—pass; clause 61—pass; clause 62—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

That concludes the business before the committee.

The hour being 11:10, what is the will of the committee?

**Some Honourable Members:** Rise.

**The Chairperson:** Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

#### IN SESSION

#### Committee Report

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Tyler Blashko (Chairperson):** Honourable Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered the following: Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, and reports the same without amendment.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Brar), that the report of the committee be received.

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Speaker:** The motion is accordingly passed.

#### CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

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

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Premier (Mr. Kinew), that Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026; Loi d'exécution du Budget de 2026 et modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

*Motion presented.*

**MLA Sala:** I'm so pleased to rise for the third time and final time on Bill 53. This team is very proud of this BITSA bill. It reflects what Manitobans have told us matters most, bringing in practical affordability measures that provide immediate relief.

Despite weeks of filibustering by the members opposite, our team has remained focused on delivering real savings for Manitobans, whether it's increased supports for homeowners and renters or by removing the PST off all food at the grocery store.

I look forward to the support of all members of this House so Manitobans can begin seeing those savings on July 1.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** So it's been clear. We have sat here day in and day night, into the wee hours of the morning, talking about affordability for Manitobans, and the reason we're talk about affordability for Manitobans is because Manitobans need it the most right now. Manitobans are living through a cost-of-living crisis. The No. 1 issue facing Manitobans today is affordability and this BITSA bill misses that mark. Manitobans need relief and they really need it now.

But what this BITSA bill has brought forward is pennies. Manitobans need more and after hours and hours and days and days talking about this budget bill, every single one of our team members has spoken as to the real affordability relief that Manitobans desperately need.

And yet not a single one of the Minister of Finance's (MLA Sala) colleagues on the NDP, on that side of the bench, have stood up to even defend their budget bill. That just shows how little this NDP government actually believes in their budget. They haven't wanted to speak in favour of it. They're embarrassed by it. They're embarrassed because they know that their budget bill does not do enough for Manitobans and Manitoba families.

Manitoba has the highest inflation rate in the country at 4.3 per cent. Manitoba's food inflation is the highest in the country at 4.9 per cent and over 50 per cent of Manitobans are within \$200 of insolvency. More Manitobans are relying on their credit cards to pay their bills, putting them more and more into debt. Manitoba has the highest property taxes in the country, the highest education property taxes in the country. The Minister of Education has skyrocketed education property taxes by 43 per cent since she came into government.

That is the record of this NDP government. They removed all the guardrails for homeowners and now Manitobans are paying the price. And it's unfortunate

for Manitoba families because the only thing that they've received in this budget bill, that we have been debating day in and day out for hours and hours, is pennies.

What our PC team has brought forward is real, meaningful affordability relief. And this NDP government stood up, one by one, and voted against. They voted denying Manitoba families \$3,000 a year in tax relief. Our PC team is committed to increasing the basic personal exemption to \$30,000, returning \$3,000 a year to Manitoba families. That is real affordability relief that Manitobans need, and we will keep fighting for that because we know that Manitobans need affordability relief.

This is something that this NDP government is continuing to deny. I challenge the members for Waverley (MLA Pankratz) and Lagimodière (Mr. Blashko) and Rossmere (MLA Schmidt) and McPhillips (MLA Devgan) and Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) and Kildonan-River East (Mrs. Schott) to go back to their constituents and explain to them why they have denied their constituents \$3,000 a year, because that's what they've done through this budget bill. That's what they did this morning when they, each one of them, voted against increasing the basic personal exemption to \$30,000.

Manitoba remains the only province in Canada to cancel indexation—the only province. Indexing income tax brackets ensures that Manitobans are protected from inflationary pressures. While every other province across the country has recognized that inflation is a concern, they have indexation—every other province in Canada except Manitoba.

This NDP government isn't listening. We've heard it from Manitobans. Manitobans are sending emails, they're signing petitions, they're writing to us; they're even posting on the NDP's social media to tell them that this budget bill is an embarrassment. Because Manitobans need more and this NDP government isn't offering them more because this NDP government doesn't care. They're not listening—they're not listening to Manitobans. They're not listening because they don't care and Manitobans are losing out as a result of that.

But yet, on our side of the table—and this is exactly why, day in and day out, hours and hours—*[interjection]*

\* (23:20)

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

Whoever's saying, shh, can quit. The Speaker's in charge here, not any individual member on the floor.

**Mrs. Stone:** I know the members opposite want to heckle me because they are embarrassed by their budget bill—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stone:** —and we're speaking the truth. We're speaking the truth for Manitobans because we are hearing from Manitobans.

And as I mentioned and I'll repeat again, emails, phone calls, they're signing petitions, they're posting on the NDP member's social media pages saying that this budget bill is a joke, saying that it does not meet the moment for the cost of living crisis and the very real financial struggles that Manitobans are facing right now.

So this NDP is embarrassed, and you know, if I was sitting on that side of the table, I'd be embarrassed for them. I am embarrassed for them and they should be embarrassed for each other because they haven't done enough. And Manitobans are speaking very loudly and very clearly that they need more.

Honourable Speaker, 4.3 per cent inflation—highest in Canada under this NDP government; 4.9 per cent food inflation—highest under this NDP government in Canada. Over 50 per cent of Manitobans within \$200 of insolvency under this NDP government. Highest property taxes in Canada under this NDP government. Highest education property taxes in Canada under this NDP government. And the highest provincial income taxes west of the Maritimes, all under this NDP government.

And the reason for that is because this NDP government doesn't care. They don't care that Manitobans are living through an affordability crisis and they're not willing to listen to you, as Manitobans.

But we are. We are willing to increase the basic personal exemption to \$30,000. We're turning \$3,000 of your hard-earned money back into your pockets. And the reason that we believe in this proposal so strongly is because we know Manitobans know best how to use their hard-earned money.

Every household budget is different. Every household and every family has different financial challenges. So what could that \$3,000 mean for you? That could mean paying for healthy food at the grocery store. That could mean paying for fuel to get to work, to get your kids to school, to daycare, to sports, to camp. That could mean actually paying to put your kids into daycare or sports or camp. And that could also mean for the family a pizza night out, bowling night out, family movie night out. Every family's household budget is different.

We know that Manitobans know best how to use their hard-earned—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stone:** —dollars, and as every other province in the country is indexing to income taxes or increasing their basic personal exemption, this NDP government is doing the opposite. They're not listening to Manitobans. They don't care about Manitobans who are struggling in an affordability crisis, and that is proof with this mediocre budget bill that they've brought forward today.

We will continue standing up for Manitobans because we need Manitoba—we know Manitobans need more than what this NDP has brought forward today.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** No other members wishing to speak?

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** You know, when it comes to my community of Portage la Prairie—you know what, sometimes I do; I get very emotional about it.

And one of the issues that I don't think a lot of the people on the other side know about Portage la Prairie, it's a great community but the one thing about Portage la Prairie, and where the basic personal exemption would have meant so much to Portage la Prairie and the people of Portage la Prairie, is I want to share with you that the median income in Portage la Prairie is between 45 and 47 thousand dollars. Think about that for a minute.

Maybe the Justice Minister would listen and could think about this when I talk about this. When you talk about an income—a median income that's between

45 and 47 thousand dollars, for more than half of the people in my constituency—roughly 75 per cent of the—of their income would effectively have been free from provincial income tax. But because this NDP government thought to shut that down, you basically shut down half of the community of Portage la Prairie that—

**An Honourable Member:** Point of order.

**Point of Order**

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The honourable First Minister, on a point of order.

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Well known rule, comments have to go through the Chair. He said you.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The honourable First Minister does have a point of order. The member needs to direct his comments through the Chair.

\* \* \*

**MLA Bereza:** My apology.

More than half of the people in my constituency, or roughly 75 per cent, would've been free from provincial income tax. This is significant; this is meaningful. And for many families, that relief could be a difference between constantly struggling and finally getting a little bit of breathing room. It could mean more money available for groceries, more help covering rent or mortgage payments, more flexibility for child-care expenses, more room in the monthly household budget, more ability to save for emergencies. And one of the most important things about this is—proposal is it directly helps lower income Manitobans. Too often, tax discussions focus only on the people at the very top with—while the lower income workers and struggling families get overlooked.

Honourable Speaker, this NDP budget overlooked the lower and middle-class people. Our proposal was different. By raising the basic personal exemption to \$30,000, we're making sure lower income Manitobans keep more of their money that they earn right away. For someone earning \$30,000 a year or less, that could've eliminated the provincial income tax. Think about that. Think about that when we're over there laughing and joking about it.

For workers in retail, for people in hospitality, for young people in Portage la Prairie entering the workforce, a family earning \$45,000 experiences inflation very differently than someone earning \$250,000.

When food prices go up, when gas prices rise, when rent increases, lower and middle-in-class Manitobans feel it first and feel it the hardest.

So for those people in Portage la Prairie that this NDP government thinks that they're—that the value of them was not important, I will work for you every day to make sure this basic personal exemption does not leave. Portage la Prairie people, you are worth it every day.

Thank you.

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** I guess this is what it looks like when you—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Narth:** Honourable Speaker, I guess this is what it looks like when you just don't have enough time in unlimited time.

Honourable Speaker, I'm happy to stand today to put a few final words on the record for Bill 53, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order. The NDP bench needs to come to order.

The honourable—*[interjection]* The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Khan) also needs to come to order.

**Mr. Narth:** Thank you once again for the opportunity to speak on what we all in this Chamber call and refer to as the BITSA bill, the budget implementation tax statutes amendment act.

And this year, unfortunately, Honourable Speaker, it's becoming clearer and clearer to see that this government, the socialist NDP government, has missed the mark. They're clearly outside of their comfort zone in bringing forward anything to do with the economy and a budget. Honourable Speaker, it is fundamental to who they are, that they do not have the capability to bring forward a budget, anything to do with the economy that has the capability of making things better for Manitobans.

\* (23:30)

Honourable Speaker, it's fundamental to them that they do not understand where the money comes from. But we on this side—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Order.

Speaker is standing and asking for order, and the NDP bench needs to come to order.

**Mr. Narth:** So, Honourable Speaker, we realize that the NDP, the socialist party of this province, are offside—or outside of their comfort zone with anything to do with the budget—with this budget or anything to do with the economy. And that's fine.

Unfortunately, in this—why we have been so passionate to work together with the government to bring forward real affordability measures, real measures to make a difference to build and grow and prosper our economy, is because we realize that the socialist party of this province does not have that ability, Honourable Speaker. And that's okay. There are strengths of the government. We're willing to work together to—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Narth:** —bring forward some of the theory that would guide building a strong economy.

Honourable Speaker, the problem why we are so passionate is because this government, the socialist government of Manitoba, has brought forward a budget that they claim to be an affordability budget. They claim to be making a difference on the economy: growing, building, prospering the province. But it misses the mark, unfortunately, at its most fundamental level.

And, Honourable Speaker, what we are seeing each and every day, what I'm seeing through my great constituency of La Vérendrye that represents a strong majority of the entrepreneurs, the entrepreneurial spirit, the business leaders of our province—I represent some of the fastest growing municipalities in the entire province. And the reason for that is that these people have a basic understanding of the economy and what it takes for economic growth.

Honourable Speaker, we're willing to share that experience. We're willing to share that knowledge. And that's why we've spent day after day—we've debated around the clock just to get the government,

this government, to understand the concerns that we are hearing from the constituents that we represent. Again, the majority of Manitobans are represented, the majority of Manitoba—maybe not the majority of Manitoba's population, but it's sure close—the majority of Manitoba is represented by this side of the House.

And the concerns that are facing—*[interjection]*

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

It's getting late. I still need to hear what's being said, so come to order.

**Mr. Narth:** What I'm trying to get across is that we have a willingness to—*[interjection]*

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

**Mr. Narth:** With the willingness of the NDP caucus, we will get through this tonight.

Honourable Speaker, what I'm trying to deliver here is the concerns that we're hearing from Manitobans each and every day, and that's the lack of affordability at its most fundamental base.

Honourable Speaker, that is far further reaching than only the individuals. That expands to the entrepreneurs, the businesses, the people that actually build, grow and protect the economy of our province. They're the ones that build the wealth for this government to enjoy the budget that they are able to redistribute. But we need to have respect for those that are creating the wealth. And what we need to do is to put more money into the pockets of those people. And it's through a variety of different ways, which we've all tried to bring forward. It is raising the personal tax exemption, the personal income tax exemption, to \$30,000. That makes a difference. That means everybody making minimum wage would be able to keep the money that they rightfully earned through their hard work.

Honourable Speaker, it doesn't stop there. We've had policy ideas that we've brought forward to build the economy as well: a single-desk model to allow for businesses to have streamlined single silo instead of multiple convoluted systems to navigate to invest back in our province.

Honourable Speaker, we have not built a system in this province that allows that. And then on top of it, we're taking more from the people that work so hard for it. And each and every day, they are finding less and less money in their own pockets.

So, Honourable Speaker, we're willing to work. We've brought forward these ideas. We've sat through debate, through different stages of the budget, through the BITSA bill and, now, in most recent days, straight through the night to showcase the concerns of many Manitobans across our province. But, unfortunately, this government is unwilling to listen.

Honourable Speaker, things are getting more expensive. Businesses are struggling. We're seeing now an exodus of investment in our province. And that is not the way forward. That is not a way to make this a have province. Each and every year, we have a larger dependency on transfer payments from the federal government, and there will be a day when that dries up.

So, Honourable Speaker, I'm asking this government to please listen to the Manitobans that are struggling, listen to the businesses that are concerned, listen to the businesses that are interested in taking advantage of the great opportunity that we have in the best province of Canada.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):**

It gives me a tremendous amount of honour to stand up as the Leader of the Opposition and put a few words on the record when it comes to this NDP budget bill.

It gives me a tremendous amount of honour to come forward and bring Manitobans' concerns forward. That's why we've been elected here: to bring the message of what we hear in our constituencies forward to the Legislature.

Now I've thought long and hard of what I could say in the final hours of May 28 as we approach into the 29th and the end of session. And I've reflected a lot on the words that I've put on the record here. A lot of fire and brimstone, a lot of attack, a lot of pointed questions and failures by the NDP. And trying to really get a response out of them onto why they're not helping Manitobans. And when I reflect back upon that, we've got nothing.

So today, in the final hours of May 28, as session comes to an end, I plead to the NDP side, to hopefully their kinder side, to their empathetic and compassionate and understanding side that affordability is

No. 1 for Manitobans right now. I'm not attacking; there's no need to laugh or heckle. Just listen to the words that are being said.

Affordability is No. 1 for Manitobans right now. Manitobans are struggling. They can't put food on their table. They can't pay their bills. They can't pay their mortgages. They're living on their credit cards. Over 50 per cent of Manitobans are with \$200 of insolvency. That is a real problem in Manitoba. Whether you're NDP, whether you're Conservative or Liberal or Independent, it doesn't matter. All Manitobans are suffering from that.

So how do we fix that problem? Well, on this side of the House, we have stood up and spoke for over 100 hours on this issue. We spent over 32 hours straight. One member, after one member, after one member on our side of the House, standing up day and night as the sun set to when the sun rose, to when the sun set again. Pleading with the NDP to just listen. Don't take our words for what we're saying. Listen to what Manitobans are saying. We read comments from followers on their Instagram and their TikTok pages. We read reports; we read—[interjection] This is the level of respect we have in here. I'm asking members opposite to be respectful. I'm not attacking you; I'm just simply stating on behalf of Manitobans of the issues we have here, and the issues in the province are families are struggling.

\* (23:40)

So how do we help them when they're struggling? We can relieve their taxes—that's one way of doing it. But in a meaningful way that's going to actually help them in their life. A meaningful way that they can actually go home and say, okay, I can breathe now. Not saving pennies. Not saving 2 cents on one litre of milk, 1 and a half cents on a litre of gas, or a PST off of junk food.

Everyone has seen through. The message has failed for the NDP. They have lost the PR battle on this issue. People have seen that the junk food tax is not enough, that over 90 per cent of groceries are already exempt from PST. So they're literally saving pennies on chips and pop and Twinkies. That's not going to make their life any better.

Look at any board in Manitoba, any online publication, read any email or letter, Manitobans will tell you that this is not reality; it's not going to help them. So what's going to help them? Tax measures aren't going to help them. So, let's look to another solution, a common sense solution that is increasing the amount

of money Manitobans can take home on their pay-cheques—increase your basic personal exemption.

Right now, it's at about \$15,000. We're saying increase that to \$30,000. Yes, that's a big jump. But what it allows Manitobans to do in a time of crisis is they can take more money home with them. Last time a significant increase like that happened was on the previous PCs; it went from \$9,000 to \$15,000. And now, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) stands up and says, well, it's higher now. It's only higher now because of the PCs. We increased it to \$15,000.

And what happened was, we put in legislation that it would increase as inflation went up. And what did they do? The NDP got rid of that.

So regardless of where we're at today, I simply say to the NDP now: Real affordability measures would be letting Manitobans keep their hard-earned money. That is the ask from this side of the House. Just let Manitobans keep more of their money in a time when they can't pay their bills, they're struggling to get by. Saving pennies on junk food will not help them. Putting money back in their bank accounts will.

Manitobans will know best what to do with their money. I ask the NDP to look at that side of the equation. Thirty hours straight hasn't done it. Over 100 hours in this House hasn't done it. Bringing a reasoned amendment hasn't brought it forward. A hoist motion to say let's discuss this in five months hasn't done it. Letters of collaboration haven't done it for them. Hundreds and thousands of emails haven't done it for them. But what we're asking for is just use your common sense. *[interjection]*

They're laughing. You can hear them laughing. This is the audacity, the nerve of this NDP government with no humility, to sit here and laugh. On behalf of—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:** —our side of the bench, to Manitobans, we apologize. We apologize for having a government in Manitoba that is not putting you ahead of their own ideology. We apologize for this NDP government for failing you. They don't have the ability to do it themselves. They don't have the compassion and empathy; on our side of the House, we do.

On our side of the House, we are going to continue to work for you. We are going to continue to make every effort we can to make your life affordable. While they heckle, while they bark, while they try to intimidate and laugh in the Chamber, we will continue to work for you.

Thank you very much, Manitoba, for your support. We will have a province one day, under a PC government coming up very soon, that will make life more affordable, that will grow Manitoba's economy, that will support you, your family, your kids for a brighter future. It's just not going to happen under this NDP government. It's going to happen under the next government in Manitoba, which will be a PC government.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Seeing no further speakers, is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Speaker:** Oh, I heard a no.

#### Voice Vote

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**The Speaker:** In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

#### Recorded Vote

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** A recorded vote, please.

**The Speaker:** A recorded vote has been called for, please call in the—okay, so—*[interjection]*

Order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

So a recorded vote has been called. The bells will ring until 12:05, unless the whips bow earlier. So call in the members.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I'd just remind members that we're still in session, so.

\* (00:00)

Order, please.

The time allocated for the ringing of the bells has expired. Therefore, I'm asking that the bells be turned off and the House proceed to the question.

So the question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

**Division**

*A RECORDED VOTE* was taken, the result being as follows:

**Ayes**

*Asagwara, Blashko, Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Compton, Corbett, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kinew, Kostyshyn, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Smith, Wiebe.*

**Nays**

*Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Goertzen, Guenter, Hiebert, Johnson, Khan, King, Narth, Nesbitt, Piwniuk, Schuler, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.*

**Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish):** Ayes 32, Nays 18.

**The Speaker:** The motion is accordingly passed.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** And the hour being—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

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

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, May 28, 2026**

**CONTENTS**

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>			
<b>Committee Reports</b>			
Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs		Basic Personal Income Tax–Exemption Increase	
Eighth Report		King	2616
Oxenham	2603	Kinew	2616
<b>Members' Statements</b>		Number of Practising Physicians	
River Park South Community Association		Brar	2618
Cross	2606	Asagwara	2618
Aayushi Sharma		Basic Personal Tax Exemption	
Wowchuk	2606	Bereza	2618
St. James Assiniboia Student Wheel Challenge		Kinew	2618
Kennedy	2607	<b>Petitions</b>	
Dr. Gabriel Lemoine		Programs for Adolescents with Disabilities	
Lagassé	2607	Khan	2619
David Ingram		Manitoba Jobs Agreement	
Devgan	2608	Stone	2619
<b>Oral Questions</b>		Placement Vetting for Elderly Persons Housing	
Budget Affordability Measures		Wowchuk	2620
Khan	2610	Intersection of PTH 75 and PR 305	
Kinew	2610	Schuler	2621
PST Exemption on Prepared Foods		MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility	
Khan	2610	Wharton	2621
Kinew	2610	Intersection of PTH 75 and PR 305	
Procurement Contracts		Goertzen	2622
Khan	2611	Programs for Adolescents with Disabilities	
Kinew	2611	Byram	2622
Basic Personal Income Tax–Exemption Increase		Nesbitt	2623
Stone	2612	Green Valley School Expansion	
Sala	2613	Narth	2624
Property Taxes		Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders	
Balcaen	2613	King	2624
Sala	2613	Programs for Adolescents with Disabilities	
Basic Personal Income Tax–Exemption Increase		Johnson	2625
Balcaen	2614	Sustaining Cash as Payment Option in Manitoba	
Sala	2614	Guenther	2625
PST Exemption on Prepared Foods		Programs for Adolescents with Disabilities	
Narth	2614	Ewasko	2626
Sala	2614	Phoenix School	
Kinew	2615	Cook	2626
Basic Personal Tax Exemption		Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders	
Narth	2615	Bereza	2627
Kinew	2615	School-Supported Lunch Programs in Brandon	
		Balcaen	2627

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**  
*(Continued)*

**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**Committee of the Whole**

Bill 53–The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026	
Sala	2628
Stone	2628
Johnson	2646

**Committee Report**  
Blashko

2651

**Concurrence and Third Readings**

Bill 53–The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026	
Sala	2651
Stone	2652
Bereza	2653
Narth	2654
Khan	2656

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings  
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

**<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>**