



Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 20, 2026

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Sixth Report

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Chairperson): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its Sixth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on May 15, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. in the Chamber of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- *Annual Report and Public Accounts of the Province of Manitoba for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024*
- *Auditor General's Report – Public Accounts and Other Financial Statement Audits dated December 2024*
- *Annual Report and Public Accounts of the Province of Manitoba for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025*
- *Auditor General's Report – Public Accounts and Other Financial Statement Audits dated December 2025*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations dated March 2019*
 - *Keeyask Process Costs and Adverse Effects Agreements with First Nations*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations dated March 2020*
 - *Keeyask Process Costs and Adverse Effects Agreements with First Nations*
 - *Public Accounts and Other Financial Statements Audits*

Committee Membership

- *Mr. BRAR*
- *MLA CHEN*
- *MLA COMPTON*
- *MLA DELA CRUZ*
- *MLA DEVGAN*
- *Mr. EWASKO*
- *Mr. GOERTZEN (Chairperson)*
- *MLA LAMOUREUX*
- *MLA MALOWAY (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. OXENHAM*
- *Mrs. STONE*

Substitutions received prior to Committee proceedings:

- *Mr. SCHULER for Mr. EWASKO*

Officials Speaking on Record

- Tyson Shtykalo, Auditor General
- Ann Ulusoy, Secretary to Treasury Board
- Brenda Feng, Provincial Comptroller

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- Annual Report and Public Accounts of the Province of Manitoba for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024
- Auditor General's Report – Public Accounts and Other Financial Statement Audits dated December 2024
- Annual Report and Public Accounts of the Province of Manitoba for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025
- Auditor General's Report – Public Accounts and Other Financial Statement Audits dated December 2025

Your Committee completed consideration of the following chapters as presented:

- Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations dated March 2019
 - Keyask Process Costs and Adverse Effects Agreements with First Nations
- Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations dated March 2020
 - Keyask Process Costs and Adverse Effects Agreements with First Nations
 - Public Accounts and Other Financial Statements Audits

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

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Seventh Report**

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Chairperson): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its Seventh Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on May 15, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. in the Chamber of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- Auditor General's Report – Investigations Report dated August 2021
 - Shellmouth Dam Compensation Program
- Auditor General's Report – Follow Up of Previously Issued Recommendations dated February 2024
 - Investigations Report: Shellmouth Dam Compensation Program
- Auditor General's Report – Follow Up of Previously Issued Recommendations dated February 2026
 - Investigations Report: Shellmouth Dam Compensation Program

Committee Membership

- Mr. BRAR
- MLA CHEN
- MLA COMPTON
- MLA DELA CRUZ
- MLA DEVGAN
- Mr. EWASKO
- Mr. GOERTZEN (Chairperson)
- MLA LAMOUREUX
- MLA MALOWAY (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. OXENHAM
- Mrs. STONE

Substitutions received prior to Committee proceedings:

- Mr. SCHULER for Mr. EWASKO

Officials Speaking on Record

- Tyson Shtykalo, Auditor General
- Ryan Klos, Deputy Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee completed consideration of the following chapters as presented:

- *Auditor General's Report – Investigations Report dated August 2021*
 - *Shellmouth Dam Compensation Program*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow Up of Previously Issued Recommendations dated February 2024*
 - *Investigations Report: Shellmouth Dam Compensation Program*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow Up of Previously Issued Recommendations dated February 2026*
 - *Investigations Report: Shellmouth Dam Compensation Program*

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Niverville Nighthawks Hockey Champions

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Honourable Speaker, the Centennial Cup is in the House; the Turnbull Cup is in the House because the Niverville Nighthawks are in the House. Everybody in the province is so proud of this group of young people, of their coaching staff, of the ownership group and, of course, the broader community that has brought this team to the top of Junior A hockey in all of Canada.

And I got to say that all the staff who work in the building here love your victory song, All Night Long, by Lionel Richie.

When people look at the record books years from now, they are going to remember your names. You're up there with the greats in MJ history alongside the Selkirk Steelers and the Portage Terriers. Now people will talk about the 2026 Niverville Nighthawks. So congratulations. And I hope that you all take the time to savour this and recognize the importance of the victory.

Sixty-nine wins in the regular season, one of the greatest seasons in the MJHL's record books. They

won the entire league, and then they went on to win the Centennial Cup, the national championship.

So congratulations to President Clarence Braun, General Manager Mike McAulay, Coach Dwight Hirst, assistant coaches Tyler Anderson, Jeff McGilt [*phonetic*] and all the other coaching staff because you have built something special here, a place where players got better each and every day.

Now, a lot of people see the trophy, they see the highlight reels on social media, but they may not see the long bus rides to communities like Swan River, Virden, Winkler or Dauphin, where I saw them actually win on Ukrainian Night earlier this season. People don't also see the billet families who helped to support and, of course, the communities that contribute energy and finances and resources to make victories like this one possible.

Now, to the graduating players, congratulations and all the best in the next stage of your athletic and your school careers. Wanted to highlight a few players. To Captain Adam Vigfusson, originally from Gimli, voted the MVP of the Centennial Cup championship: Good luck as you represent our province and your team at York University this fall.

To goaltender Austin Dubinsky, voted MJHL league MVP, MVP of Canadian junior hockey and MVP of the final game of the Centennial Cup—that's quite a collection, so we wish you the best in your choice between university or college. You're going to have a lot of options with a haul like that.

Forward Hayden Wheddon, top scorer in the entire MJHL; to forward Merik Boles, now off to play at the University of Regina; and I also wanted to give a special shout-out to left-winger Marlen Edwards. Your grandma presented me with this tobacco as a sign of respect, and I am going to show you a sign of respect by hitting the celly, that you may go viral on social media.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Kinew: The clapping's for you, not for me, by the way.

What I love most about this team, though, is that you show that we have what it takes to compete anywhere in Canada, right here in Manitoba. This team actually had not only the championship of the Manitoba Junior Hockey League, they had the most Manitobans on the roster of any team in the NJHL, so young people from cities and towns, whose families come from First Nations and farming communities, all

coming together to make something very, very special and memorable happen on the ice.

* (13:40)

Now, earlier today, I had the opportunity to meet many of these young men as we hosted them for lunch, and in a very humble way I asked them to please pay it forward, to please help out the next girl or boy or young kid coming up behind them.

This game of puck brings families together. It gives us so many of the most memorable moments in our lives. If you can be there to tie the skates, to offer a tip or a highlight or even just to give the high five to somebody on a pond, an ODR or in a small rural barn, you are giving back to this thing that elevated you to this amazing milestone.

But I wanted to say thanks for giving our province so much already. We can now say that the best Junior A team in Manitoba is the best Junior A team in all of Canada.

Congratulations to the 2026 Niverville Nighthawks.

The Manitoba Junior Hockey League Turnbull Cup Champions and the Canadian Junior Hockey League Centennial Cup Champions, Niverville Nighthawks:

Hockey operations: Tyler Anderson, assistant coach; Gena Artemchuk, trainer; Clarence Braun, team president; Justin Giesbrecht, physiotherapist/head trainer; Dwight Hirst, head coach; Kevin Lansard, director of hockey operations; Mike McAulay, general manager; Jeff McGill, associate coach; Rob Pambrun, strength and conditioning coach.

2025-2026 team: Ryken Arran, Tyler Bernier, Merik Boles, Parker Carrier, Ben Chornomydz, Jake DeMone, Max Dowse, Austin Dubinsky, Marlen Edwards, Beckham Garchinski, Jase Konecni, Aaron Krestanowich, Teagan Kurtz, Loik Leduc, Jaden Mah, Kole Mears, Calyb Moore, Evan Panzer, Thomas Phillips, Parker Rolston, John Scott, Adam Vigfusson, Luke Wagner, Hayden Wheddon, Dawson Zeller.

The Speaker: The honourable First Minister.

Mr. Kinew: Yes, and I'd just ask to include the roster, the coaching staff, ownership group and players for the Niverville Nighthawks into Hansard.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): Today, I am honoured to welcome to the Legislative Assembly the players and coaching staff of one of the greatest hockey teams in Manitoba history, the Niverville Nighthawks.

This year, the Nighthawks took home not one, but two trophies on both the provincial and national stages, etching their names amongst the greatest hockey teams not only in Manitoba, but across the country.

Here in Manitoba, the Nighthawks dominated both the regular season and playoffs, scoring more goals than any other MJHL team while allowing fewer goals than any of their opponents, and beating out more established franchises like, for instance, the Steinbach Pistons and the Winkler Flyers, to name a few.

Niverville, one of the fastest growing communities in Canada, has stood behind their team since day one. Fans packed the Community Resource & Recreation Centre game after game to cheer on their team. It is worth mentioning that this state-of-the-art arena was supported and funded by the previous Progressive Conservative government, and it has proven to be a great investment.

But for the Nighthawks, the title of provincial champions was not enough. The Nighthawks travelled to the Centennial Cup where the winning streak continued. The team went undefeated, advancing to the final game where they claimed the national title with an impressive 4-1 win over the Summerside capitals.

I'm sure that all members of the Assembly will join me in congratulating Team President Clarence Braun, General Manager Mike McAulay, Coach Dwight Hirst and all the management and players of the Niverville Nighthawks on their incredible performance this season.

I would like to provide a list of the players and management of the Nighthawks team to be included into Hansard as part of my statement, and conclude with a heartfelt, go, Nighthawks, go.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Kelvin High School Ultimate Frisbee Champions

Hon. Mike Moroz (Minister of Innovation and New Technology): Honourable Speaker, today is a day of champions. I rise to recognize an extraordinary group of athletes and their dedicated coaches from Kelvin High School in my constituency of River Heights. Not only are they the 2026 provincial ultimate champions, but they recently returned from Ultimate Canada invitational tournament in Cambridge as national champions.

To provide greater clarity about the strength of this team, 16 of these players also compete as part of Team Manitoba, and three of them, Sylvie Claassen, Maeve Hemmerling and Liam Howes, will compete as part of Team Canada this summer in Spain.

The Kelvin ultimate team was founded in 2003 by coach Heidi Howes, who has been the driving force behind its culture of success for 23 years. In that time, Kelvin has played in the provincial finals 12 times, claiming seven titles, while also playing at six national finals claiming four national titles—an astonishing record.

Honourable Speaker, 25 years from now these athletes will not be talking about that calculus class they took on Thursday morning. They'll be sharing the vivid memories they created together as part of this tightly knit group. Such is the power of sport and community.

I want to congratulate the players and coaches on your tremendous accomplishments. It reflects on your talent, teamwork and dedication and brings pride not just to River Heights, but to all of Manitoba.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing the 2026 Kelvin ultimate team as provincial and national champions and in wishing them continued success in the years ahead.

And I ask the names of the players and coaches be added to Hansard.

Coaches: Heidi Howes, Myles Raichura.

Players: Thomas Airey, Ze Beckta, Isaac Chang, Molly Claassen, Sylvie Claassen, Melia Dyck, Mattias Froese, Violet Hegel, Maeve Hemmerling, Tuula Hill, Alex Horne, Kate Horne, Liam Howes, Portia Ireland, Georgia Koroscil, Carson Lamont, Owen McNeil, Mika Neufeld, Charlie Ormiston, Paige Preyma, Damon Raichura.

Niverville Nighthawks Hockey Champions

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize three outstanding young athletes from the Interlake region who have proudly represented Manitoba on the national stage and helped bring home the Centennial Cup championship to Manitoba: Stonewall's Hayden Wheddon, a constituent of Lakeside, Gimli's Adam Vigfusson, a constituent of Interlake-Gimli and St. Andrews' Dawson Zeller, a constituent of Selkirk, played key roles in leading the Niverville Nighthawks to one of the greatest seasons in Manitoba Junior Hockey League history, and ultimately to a national championship at

the Centennial Cup in Summerside, Prince Edward Island.

Hayden Wheddon led the entire MJHL in scoring this season with an incredible 90 points and continued his outstanding play at the Centennial Cup, recording 12 points during the tournament, with six goals and six assists, including two goals in the final championship game. Hayden's mom Helga and his sister Jorga join in the gallery today.

Team Captain Adam Vigfusson demonstrated exceptional leadership both on and off the ice, recently earning the MJHL's RBC Community Award for his commitment to giving back to the community. Adam was also named the Centennial Cup tournament MVP after leading by example throughout the national championship run, marking up 12 points with seven goals and five assists in the tournament. Adam's parents, Jen and Eric, and his billet parents, also join us in the gallery today.

Meanwhile, Dawson Zeller delivered clutch performances throughout both the playoffs and the Centennial Cup tournament, consistently stepping up in key moments as the Nighthawks captured the national title, tallying up 11 points with five goals and six assists in the tournament.

These three young men exemplify hard work, leadership, teamwork and community pride. Their success is a testament not only to their talent, but also to their families, coaches, billets, volunteers and communities who supported them throughout their journey.

On behalf of this House, I congratulate Hayden, Adam, Dawson and the entire Niverville Nighthawks organization on winning the Centennial Cup championship and bringing tremendous pride to Manitoba and the Interlake.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Pinays Manitoba 10th Anniversary

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): I rise today to recognize Pinays Manitoba and congratulate them on their 10th anniversary.

Since 2016, Pinays Manitoba has evolved alongside the growing Filipino community here in Manitoba. The organization supports and empowers Filipino women while recognizing their achievements and contributions across many different fields in our society.

* (13:50)

Earlier this month, I had the honour of attending this year's Trailblazers Recognition Awards. It was wonderful to see community members come together to celebrate Filipino women who continue to lead and inspire others through their dedication, leadership and services. I also want to recognize the members and volunteers of Pinays Manitoba, whose hard work and commitment helped make the evening so special.

For the past 10 years, Pinays Manitoba has witnessed more and more Filipino women making meaningful contributions in Manitoba and beyond. These remarkable women continue to break barriers, open doors of opportunities for others and help build stronger and more empowered communities.

I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Pinays Manitoba on this important milestone and recognizing all this year's Trailblazers Recognition Awards recipients.

Honourable Speaker, I also ask for leave to enter this year's Trailblazers award recipients and my guests' names into Hansard after my member statement.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Trailblazers award recipients: Dr. Alysa Almojuela, Dr. Bon Abigail Castillo, Aimee Intac-Leung, Venus Ramos.

Guests: Remy Amoyo, Araceli Ancheta, Arlene Banilbo, Josefina Concepcion, Emmie Joaquin, Jean Padrinao, Regina Ramos Urbano, Reynaldo Reyes, Jocelyn Striemer, Joanne Viviezca.

Niverville Nighthawks Hockey Champions

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to add my voice in recognizing an extraordinary achievement in Manitoba hockey and a moment of pride for southeast Manitoba.

This past weekend, the Niverville Nighthawks captured the Centennial Cup as national Junior A champions after already winning the MJHL Turnbull Cup championship earlier this spring. For a team in only its fourth season, this is a remarkable accomplishment and one that has put Manitoba hockey on the national stage.

What makes this story even more meaningful for many of us in southeast Manitoba is how connected this organization is to the proud hockey culture of our region.

The Nighthawks' general manager, Mike McAulay, once played for the St. Malo Warriors, a team that

built its own winning tradition as back-to-back Junior B champions.

This year, the newly formed La Broquerie Habs added to that tradition by capturing a league championship of their own, while the Grunthal Red Wings continue their proud legacy of hockey excellence in southeast Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, this region produces winners. Whether it's the Warriors, the Habs, the Red Wings or now the Nighthawks, southeast Manitoba continues to develop outstanding athletes, passionate volunteers and strong community leaders.

Now, Honourable Speaker, some people might say there's something in the water, but I shouldn't say that too loud or the Minister for Environment might shut that down, too.

But in all seriousness, congratulations to the Niverville Nighthawks on an incredible season and on bringing both the Turnbull Cup and Centennial Cup back home to Manitoba. You make our region proud.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to moving on to the fun part of the day, I'd like to draw attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Adam Vigfusson and his parents and billet parents, Jen and Eric Vigfusson, Lonnie and Barry Nacci, as well as Hayden Wheddon and his parents, Helga and Gorga.

We welcome you all here today.

And I would also draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today leadership from the Aga Khan Council for Canada who are guests of the Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation (Mr. Moses).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Jobs Agreement Union Membership Conditions

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to start off by congratulating the Niverville Nighthawks who are with us here today on being the MJHL and Centennial Cup champions. Your hard work, sacrifice, dedication and years and decades in the making has finally paid off. To the parents, families, neighbours, coaches, volunteers: thank you for your sacrifice. Without you, these kids would not

be able to have reached the pinnacle of their athletic careers. Thus far, your best years are ahead of you.

Now, on a sadder note, yesterday in Estimates, the Premier made it clear he is proud of picking winners and losers. But this isn't a game; this is real life. The Premier is making Manitobans' lives harder with his NDP job-killing agreement. The Premier is forcing Manitobans who choose not to unionize, to unionize.

Why is the Premier picking winners and losers and forcing Manitobans to unionize?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Honourable Speaker, obviously, it's an amazing honour that we get to host the Niverville Nighthawks here today, and it's nice to see the bipartisan consensus around cheering on young athletes.

I also wanted to add on the record my congratulations to the Kelvin ultimate team. It's a really amazing achievement to see that provincial, national title and to be a former parent, a part of the Kelvin High School community, it really means a lot to see the continued tradition of excellence.

Now when it comes to building things like a new gym for the Kelvin High School or rinks across the province, we're putting people to work. We're building Manitoba. We're all working together.

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

Remittance Fee Transparency

Mr. Khan: You can all clearly see that Premier refuses to answer why he is forcing non-union Manitobans to join a union.

Yesterday, Manitobans learned that this government didn't even create the job-killing agreement; it was drafted and wrote by a group, Manitoba Building Trades. This group is connected to the Premier's union allies; they provided this document to the NDP government. After one meeting and zero consultation with stakeholders, this NDP government approved it. That's not transparency. That's not accountability. That's not one Manitoba. That's this Premier picking winners and losers.

Within this job-killing agreement, there is a clause that states every hour worked by anyone will have 85 cents tacked onto that project. That means hundreds of thousands—if not millions—of your taxpayer dollars are being funded where?

Will the Premier tell Manitobans where that money is going, or is it going where everyone knows—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Kinew: Couple facts on the record here: The money's going to build schools, five of them, that they never built. The money's going to build the highways and bridges and infrastructure so we can have a great economy here in Manitoba.

And you know what we love on this side of the House? We love people who go to work with hard hats on, high-vis gear and steel-toe boots. That's who we come to work for here in the Legislature each and every single day.

They're criticizing us for the same technique used by the federal government, for the same technique advocated by Pierre Poilievre. I can tell Pierre you don't like his ideas next time I see him, but not sure how that's going to work out for your political careers. Here in Manitoba, we're focused on one thing: building a better tomorrow by bringing everyone together. If the members want to get on board, there's still time.

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

Request to Cancel

Mr. Khan: Let's put some more facts on the record. It's simply not what the Premier is saying. Eighty-five cents of every hour worked on these jobs is going to the Manitoba Building Trades. It's not going to building schools; it's going to a union that supports this NDP's ideology.

You want to talk about building schools? The previous PC government built 15 schools without taking away Manitobans' democratic right to choose where they want to work, union or non-union. On this side of the House, we support both of them. On that side of the House, they're only supporting unions. They are forcing you to join a union and taking your taxpayer dollars to fund their political ideology.

Honourable Speaker, it's clear that this Premier is dividing Manitobans. When will he do the right thing and kill his Manitoba job-killing agreement and support all Manitobans equally?

* (14:00)

Mr. Kinew: Well, the member just scared the MJHL champions off. Why did he do that? We were going—it was going so well before.

Okay. Here is the reality of what we're talking about: He says building trades because he doesn't have the courage to take on the people that he's trying to

attack here. Electricians, pipefitters, boilermakers, bricklayers, blue-collar Manitobans: that's who we're working for, and we're working together with them to build schools, to build infrastructure and to build a strong economy.

On that side of the House, they don't know what goes into a strong team, and you can see the evidence with the PC caucus voting with their feet. They're all heading for the exits.

So let's not take a page from their playbook; let's instead work together as one mighty province and build a powerful future for all of us together.

The Speaker: Order, please.

I'd just remind members not to engage members in the gallery in their comments or speeches.

Impact on Project Costs

Mr. Khan: Previous projects in Manitoba prove that union and non-union workers can work together successfully and respectfully, unlike this Premier or this entire NDP government. In a true one Manitoba model, that is where we stand on this side of the House, supporting all Manitobans, union and non-union. It's your right to choose where you want to work.

But this Premier has chosen 12 per cent of the union workers over 88 per cent of Manitobans that have chosen to work in a non-union shop. This government is choosing division over inclusivity.

Now, will the Premier tell Manitobans why he thinks he's justified in adding an additional 20 per cent price tag on top of all of these projects? Construction Association of Rural Manitoba says this jobs-killing agreement would add 20 per cent.

Why is the Premier okay with charging you an extra 20 per cent for a project that you'll never see get done?

Mr. Kinew: You know, I do have to correct the record. The schools are being built right now, something that never happened under them. And the rest batch of—the next batch of schools is going through the tendering process, so we are getting things done where the PCs simply delayed and cut and never did a single thing, other than try to attack their fellow Manitobans, during their time in office.

So I encourage the member opposite, if he wants to throw stones, then mention the names of the people that he's attacking. Get up and say electrician; get up and say plumbing; get up and say pipefitter; get up and say bricklayer, because those are the people that we

want to work with to build Manitoba's future. Let's all work together and not fall prey to the division of the past.

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

Mr. Khan: The key difference that the Premier left out in his answer there was that he only supports those trades if you're unionized. On this side of the House, we support all trades, whether you're unionized or non-unionized.

Why won't the Premier get up and correct the record if that's what he actually stands for? According to this Premier, just yesterday he said he measures success by how many workers are working in Manitoba that are unionized. He didn't mention all Manitobans; he said only unionized workers is how he measures success. It's shameful and it's wrong.

On top of all this, as I said, the Premier's adding an additional 20 per cent price tag onto all projects for all of these added fees. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: Will the Premier tell Manitobans where that 20 per cent extra money is going, and why won't he come clear with Manitobans on how he's trying to divide them to support his political ideology?

Mr. Kinew: You know, I do have to object to the member opposite saying that being part of a union is shameful and wrong. I hope he apologizes in the next set of questions because the evidence is clear: unions raise wages for all workers when they're present in a jurisdiction, including for non-unionized employees.

So if you want bigger paycheques, you should be a fan of unions whether you have a union card—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —or not. And that's why we encourage workers to join a union when they have the opportunity to do so. Better pay, better benefits, better health and safety, and help if you ever have to go into a dispute with your employer.

But, of course, the members opposite, they don't ever want to say something like that because they're not on your side. They're on the side of the rich people who are smoking cigars at the Manitoba Club right now. You might catch me there on occasion giving a speech, but I never stay to visit.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Request to Cancel

Mr. Khan: Let's set the record straight once again. I said the Premier's answer is shameful. I said the Premier is shameful for dividing Manitobans. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: And I said it's shameful that the Premier is picking winners and losers. I also said it's shameful that the Premier is forcing Manitobans to work where they don't want to work.

Section 20.2.11 of the Manitoba jobs agreement states, and I quote: An affiliate local union within that contractor trades may, at its absolute discretion, evaluate a contractor's non-unionized employee. End quote.

That is not co-operation, equality or fairness. This is an agreement that not only prioritizes union labour over workers already, but it is one that gives the union complete veto power to remove any Manitoban for a job site if they're not unionized.

Why is the Premier creating two different classes of workers in Manitoba construction industry, and will he do the right thing and kill his Manitoba job-killing agreement today?

Mr. Kinew: You know, when we talk about shameful, I am reminded of a lawsuit against the member, which apparently was just discontinued in secret on May 5 of this year. I'll table these documents for the House to examine.

Again, the member opposite was indebted to the person suing him by, and I quote, \$562,129, and was claimed to, quote, virtually abandon the corporate defendant, end quote, leaving it in a disapplying financial state. Even his former Cabinet colleague, Kevin Klein, wrote: The fact that a former business partner is suing him raises serious questions about his credibility and ethics.

I think it's very important from a perspective of conflict of interest for the member to rise in his place right now and explain the details of why this troubling lawsuit was discontinued abruptly on May 5 of this year.

Manitoba Jobs Agreement Consultation and Transparency Concerns

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Documents obtained through freedom of information requests reveal that the Manitoba jobs agreement was developed by Manitoba Building Trades union bosses and given to this NDP government on July 23 last year. Then the NDP and Manitoba Building Trades held only one meeting on August 26 of last year to discuss the MJA, and the agreement was signed only 13 days later.

In the words of Darryl Harrison, the MJA impacts billions of dollars in taxpayer-funded construction work. Manitobans should expect a significantly higher level of consultation, transparency and procurement analysis before a framework of this magnitude is implemented.

If the MJA was not a corrupt NDP deal—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): The PCs are spreading misinformation about Manitoba jobs agreement because they have ideologically opposed to working, getting fair wages, benefits and stable jobs, plain and simple, Honourable Speaker.

While the PCs spent years failing to build major projects and funneling public dollars into expensive P3 schemes for their rich friends, we are building schools, hospitals, roads and trade infrastructure that create good jobs for Manitobans.

Manitoba jobs agreements are about simple idea: public dollars build public's infrastructure. They should go to Manitoba workers.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Order, please. Stop the clock.

In the member's previous question, he was quoting from a document. Was it a private or public document?

Mr. Guenter: Public. Public document.

The Speaker: Thank you.

* (14:10)

Mr. Guenter: Well, none of that is true. But what is true is that this NDP Premier (Mr. Kinew) is taking a page out of Trudeau's playbook. He's picking friends who've supported him politically and financially and throwing them a massive sole-source contract that will benefit them financially and him politically, all at the expense—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: —of taxpayers. And that's the story of this NDP government and their blatantly discriminatory Manitoba jobs agreement.

So why is this Premier (Mr. Kinew) choosing to put payoffs and politics over the paycheques of Manitoba workers and their families?

MLA Sandhu: I want to thank the member for that question. We are listening to Manitobans, Honourable Speaker.

Even before the elections, we announced that we will be putting Manitoba workers on the jobs, Honourable Speaker. Every worker under—who is working on MJA is better off because of MJA. MJA is about fair wages, safe work sites, better benefits. I have never met a worker who doesn't want to make more money.

I have given the member enough time to show me a person who wants to make less money. He hasn't shown me a single person so far.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Order, please. Stop the clock.

In the honourable member's previous question, he said, and I quote, that what the minister had just said wasn't—hope they're not—sorry; none of that is true, but what is true.

So, in reference to that, the honourable member is coming very close to suggesting that a member was lying, so I would ask him—I would caution him—*[interjection]*

Order.

I'd caution him to be more careful with the language he's using.

Mr. Guenter: You know, there's a reason why 88 per cent of Manitoba workers have chosen to be non-unionized, and it's because they make more money. But for those 12 per cent of Manitobans who've chosen to be unionized, that's fine. It's about worker choice. This government doesn't respect worker choice.

This government met with one organization on the Manitoba jobs agreement. They met with the Manitoba Building Trades on one occasion and signed an agreement less than two weeks later. They let their political friends write their own ticket and ignored 88 per cent of Manitoba's construction workforce.

Join a union, you can work; choose not to, no paycheque for you.

How can this Premier talk about one Manitoba when he picks one side over another?

MLA Sandhu: I don't know why the member hates Manitoba workers. I have seen member talk about—he wants to bring member from Saskatchewan, from Alberta. I don't know why he doesn't want to train workers here in Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, he only listens to the lobbyists. I'm listening to over 60,000 Manitoba trade workers here in Manitoba. They want to have better benefits. They want to have better wages. They want to have a safer work site. Honourable Speaker, the person was asking the question doesn't want the people to go safely to their houses. That's terrible.

Thank you.

Manitoba Jobs Agreement Barriers for Rural Contractors

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): This past weekend, I visited with many constituents, some of which were tradespeople and contractors that are very concerned with the NDP's unfair Manitoba jobs agreement. And, like many others we are hearing from, who are they consulting? Construction Association of Rural Manitoba made it clear this agreement doesn't serve rural Manitoba and will raise project costs by 20 per cent.

Can the minister explain how rural contractors are expected to compete under this agreement when many have expressed concerns with additional costs and barriers?

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): Honourable Speaker, anybody can bid on these contracts, unionized or open shop. Recently, 60 per cent of the work went to ununionized shops—open shops, Honourable Speaker.

So that works. Like, anybody can bid on the contract. The member can tell—go to C-L-R-A-M and tell them: Hey, you know what; go bid on the contract, there's a work that can be done.

And what is this about, Honourable Speaker? Manitoba jobs agreement is about Manitoba workers, and we are prioritizing Manitoba workers on the work site. This is all about Manitoba workers. I don't know why the member opposite doesn't want Manitobans to work on these sites where Manitobans are paying for those sites, Honourable—thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Agassiz, on a supplemental question.

Construction Sector Division Concerns

Ms. Byram: When it comes to consultation, it's typical of this NDP government to hand-pick only a select few. They don't want to hear from all Manitobans.

This government is ignoring the concerns of open-shop contractors and independent tradespeople.

Why were so many left out of this process and now shut out of opportunities on publicly funded projects?

MLA Sandhu: Honourable Speaker, as I said earlier, anybody can bid on these contracts, open shop, unionized shops. Sixty per cent of the work went to open shops.

Honourable Speaker, this is all about having a safer work site, better benefits and people making more money. I don't know why the member doesn't want other Manitobans to make more money while she's making a six-figure salary.

I have never met anyone—again, as I said earlier, I don't want to see a person who wants to make less money, Honourable Speaker. So far, from the Conservative side, I—they have not shown me a single person who wants to make less money.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Ms. Byram: The trade sector is asking for fairness, flexibility and opportunity. Manitoba jobs agreement totally closes out the market for many contractors. This does not help Manitobans' economy—Manitoba's economy, and we are seeing that this very day here in Manitoba with the highest in food inflation and lowest on building the economy.

Why is the NDP government creating division within Manitoba's construction industry instead of working collaboratively with all sectors of trades to build a stronger Manitoba?

MLA Sandhu: Honourable Speaker, before the election, we consulted thousands of Manitobans and they have given us the mandate to implement MJA. There was hundreds and thousands of people who voted during that time.

This is all about safer work sites, having Manitoba licence plates on work sites, Honourable Speaker. But the—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Sandhu:—personal attack on workers, they want to bring the workers from Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Manitoba Jobs Agreement Remittance to Building Trades Council

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, Manitobans are already struggling through one of the worst affordability crises. Now we learn that under the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) forced unionization agreement, contractors are required to pay an additional—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Narth:—fee: 85 cents—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Narth:—per hour, per worker, directly to the Manitoba Building Trades, the same organization actively running political campaigns supporting this NDP government.

Why are Manitoba taxpayers funding an agreement that funnels money into an organization campaigning for the Manitoba NDP?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Honourable Speaker, I want Manitobans to listen very carefully to the words in what he's advocating for. He wants more of Manitoba work to go to people out of province. He's saying he wants to see those Saskatchewan and Alberta and Ontario plates on our job sites right here. That's not what we believe in.

We believe in: We build Manitoba. We want to build it with Manitobans working together. That's how we get jobs done. That's how we grow our economy. That's how we build more schools, more hospitals, more personal-care homes. That's how we move our economy by—forward, by putting more Manitobans to work to build this great province.

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

Mr. Narth: Honourable Speaker, the reality is the forced unionization agreement is not about workers. Workers are asking a simple question: Why is nearly a dollar an hour being diverted away from their paycheques into the hands of politically connected organizations? At a time when families are struggling to afford groceries, mortgages and fuel, construction workers deserve every dollar possible in their own

pockets, not more politically driven fees and bureaucracy.

Why is this Premier (Mr. Kinew) putting union insiders ahead of hard-working Manitoba construction workers?

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, we're putting more Manitobans to work with Manitoba jobs agreement right here in our great province to build up this province: more hospitals, schools, personal-care homes, highways. These projects can get done when you put more Manitobans at work doing that good job.

* (14:20)

Now that means that's more electricians, that's more carpenters, that's more block-heavy construction electricians, gas fitters, mechanics, iron workers, machinists, plumbers, power electricians, steam fillers. All those people are working here in Manitoba because of MJAs. And you want more? Those work sites are now training sites so we can train more apprentices to become the experts of the future.

Safer training, higher wages and the 'bility to train the next generation: that's what MJA brings to our economy.

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

Mr. Narth: Honourable Speaker, the MJA has provided no results whatsoever. This government is making our economy fall further behind each and every day. The exports for our province are down 27.2 per cent in only one year. Business confidence is collapsing. Investors are looking to other provinces with less red tape, lower taxes and a fair procurement system.

Now this Premier has created a system that construction associations warn will increase costs, reduce competition and shut out 88 per cent of Manitoba's construction workforce.

How many businesses, jobs and infrastructure projects will Manitoba need to lose before this government scraps this corrupt and discriminatory—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, we know that the former failed government was against trade and exports. That's why they closed down the international offices. That's why they thanked Donald Trump for those tariffs. We know members opposite and their former failed government are against workers, and that's why they speak against Manitoba workers

working in our MJA agreements. And we know that they're against safe training, so we are not taking any lessons from them.

Instead we're investing in more and safer training for apprentices and skilled trades right across the province. That's why we're employing more of them here on our projects and that's why we're making sure we turn our job sites into training sites.

I'm happy to say that we've had record numbers of apprentices go through skilled trainings last year. We'll keep doing that good work, inviting more Manitobans to get trained, to work on our great province and do that—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Manitoba Jobs Agreement Impact on Project Costs and Competition

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): The NDP signed the forced unionization jobs agreement with just one meeting with their chosen union and after only 13 days, with no transparent consultation process or meaningful engagement from the construction industry. Now Manitobans are learning the real consequences: higher costs, fewer bids and more barriers to getting projects built.

While Manitobans are struggling under an affordability 'creisis', why did this Kinew government rush into an agreement that will leave Manitoba taxpayers paying more?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Well, Honourable Speaker, we certainly understand that affordability is a big obstacle for people these days. And, you know, member opposite mentions paying more. We certainly are attuned to that as we listen to Manitobans.

That's why we're bringing forward real tax measures to bring tax relief for Manitobans in our budget. We want to remove the PST off of all food and grocery stores. It's a very common sense, simple-to-understand initiative that brings real savings, delivers real savings to Manitobans every time they go and buy food at the grocery store.

The only people in the entire province who aren't on board are the PC members opposite. I don't know why. Get on board, pass our budget today and deliver real savings for Manitobans.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stone: If this NDP cared about affordability, they wouldn't be skyrocketing project costs by 20 per cent

as a result of their forced unionization agreement. Manitoba taxpayers are already struggling under their increase of taxes, and they want to cost Manitoba taxpayers more with their forced unionization agreement.

So why is this Premier (Mr. Kiew) making Manitoba taxpayers pay more? Why is this Premier putting his own ideology ahead of 88 per cent of the construction workforce?

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, I think member opposite should be a little bit more clear. Is she saying that she doesn't want workers to get higher wages? Because that's what she seems to be advocating for. Does she say that she doesn't want safer work sites for people to go to the job safely and then return home safely? Is that what she's advocating for?

She should be more clear. Maybe she has an actual axe to grind with one of the professions. Is—does she not like the electricians or the gas fitters? Does she have an issue with the mechanics or the machinists or the plumbers or the carpenters? Is that what she's advocating for?

She should be more clear with Manitobans with what she's actually talking about, because our plan delivers more work for Manitobans. It put Manitobans on the work site, trains them up safely so they can return home to their families and ensure that while they're doing that, they get a good wage along the way.

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

Mrs. Stone: I'll be very clear with the minister. On this side of the House, we want to support all Manitoba workers, unlike this NDP government that wants to pick and choose winners and losers according to their own ideology, which is exactly why they're pushing forward with a forced unionization agreement. The only thing that this agreement is going to do is jack up skyrocketing costs for public projects and push those open-shop contractors into Saskatchewan and other provinces.

Is that this Premier's end goal, is less workers, less competition and picking winners and losers here in Manitoba?

Mr. Moses: Well, let's be clear, Honourable Speaker, with Manitobans that the members opposite are, first of all, continue to be way off base. But the reality is that the MJAs are open to unionized and non-unionized shops. They can all apply and all be part of

that contract and make sure we build Manitoba up together.

But having said that, they're talking about big projects getting built. What was their record? We all know that the crane was—it's—was extinct under their record. We finally brought it back, where we're seeing more projects being built in downtown, in rural Manitoba, more schools, more hospitals, more projects right across this great province. And how do we get it done? With the hard work of Manitobans.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Kirkfield Park. *[interjection]*

Order.

Large Drug and Weapons Seizure Police Announce Results of Operation

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): Honourable Speaker, earlier this morning, the Minister of Justice stood with Manitoba's senior leaders in law enforcement where they delivered historical news.

Can the Minister of Justice please tell the House more about our government and how they're committed to cracking down on drug traffickers as well as removing drugs before they get into our communities?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, thanks very much, the member for Kirkfield Park. What a great question.

The Manitoba Criminal Intelligence Centre and Manitoba Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit, in collaboration with Winnipeg Police Service, today announced the largest drug bust in Manitoba's history: 33 arrests have been made, 500 kilograms of dangerous drugs are off our streets, 14 firearms and \$825,000 in proceeds have been seized.

I want to thank the Winnipeg Police Service, I want to thank Brandon police, I want to thank Winkler police, I want to thank Morden police as well as police services across our country and throughout our province who have helped to get these dangerous criminals out of our communities.

This bust sends a clear message: No organized—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Manitoba Jobs Agreement Impact on Infrastructure Project Costs

MLA Jeff Berezka (Portage la Prairie): Families in Portage la Prairie have fought for a new hospital because Manitoba needs more health care, not more red tape. Experts warn the Manitoba jobs-killing

agreement could've—could add 20 per cent to the cost. Imagine what it would have done to that hospital.

Why is this NDP government making families pay more and more under this job-killing plan?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker—Honourable Speaker—on that side of the House, they cut health care for seven and a half years. On that side of the House, they took no action for seven and a half years to make life more affordable for Manitobans.

On this side of the House, we're building up health care, we're building up our province, and we're doing it in a way that's getting more Manitobans jobs here at home. That's health-care workers, that's construction workers, that's Manitobans here at home.

We're going to do the work of fixing the damage that they did to health care. We're also going to build up our economy at the same time.

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

* (14:30)

MLA Bereza: The Portage regional hospital was built by local contractors and skilled Manitoba tradespeople who got the job done. Under the Manitoba jobs-killing agreement, those same workers will face more fees, more bureaucracy and fewer opportunities.

How does blocking—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Bereza: —local jobs help Manitoba families, and why won't they open that hospital on time?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker—Honourable Speaker.

The member sits on a side of the House that not only fired hundreds of nurses, fired almost 100 paramedics from rural Manitoba, made sure that we have the worst ability in all of Canada to connect people to a primary-care provider or doctor. The member sits on a side of the House that didn't even bother to plan to staff the Portage hospital.

Honourable Speaker, that member should look around his caucus and ask his colleagues who were sitting around the Cabinet table why they didn't bother to do the very basics to support health care in his community.

Don't worry about it. We're doing the work they refused to do for seven and a half years. We're building

health-care infrastructure and we're building a stronger economy for all Manitobans.

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

MLA Bereza: So we can all agree if the Manitoba jobs-killing agreement was in place, the Portage hospital would have cost Manitoba taxpayers millions and millions more. Communities like Portage la Prairie need infrastructure built efficiently, and taxpayers need value for their money.

Industry leaders warn the Manitoba jobs-killing agreement will mean higher costs, less competition on major projects.

Why is this NDP government risking more expensive infrastructure Manitoba can't afford with this job-killing program?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, you know, this gives me an opportunity to talk about all of the health-care jobs that we are creating here in Manitoba.

Over 4,000 net-new health-care jobs in Manitoba as a result of our efforts in just over two and a half years; many of those jobs created in Portage la Prairie, many of those jobs created in a region where the former failed PCs were cutting the resources for doctors, firing nurses and denying paramedics the opportunity to work and serve rural Manitobans.

The record on that side of the House on health care is disgusting. It is shameful. And it is something that we are still working to rectify in Manitoba—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —today. The member for Portage la Prairie would do better to—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The—*[interjection]*

Order.

Manitoba Jobs Agreement

Financial Impacts for Taxpayers and Municipalities

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): This government calls this Manitoba jobs-killing agreement one Manitoba, yet 88 per cent of Manitoba construction workers are non-unionized and were excluded from meaningful consultation.

While Manitobans struggle with affordability, this NDP government is listening to 12 per cent while risking higher construction costs for everyone else.

Why is this government ignoring the majority of Manitoba workers while driving up costs for taxpayers and municipalities?

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): Honourable Speaker, the problem with the Conservatives is they are listening to only 400 people, where I'm listening to over 60,000 people. They only listen to the lobbyists.

We are out there—as I said previously in my answers, I had not—haven't seen a single person who wants to make less money, Honourable Speaker. This is all about safer work sites, better benefits and fair wages. Does—the member doesn't want other people to make fair wages?

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Mr. King: Taxpayers expect this government to exercise due diligence and protect public dollars, yet industry groups say there was no proper analysis of the cost, competition or scheduling impacts before this MJA was imposed. At a time when Manitobans are already struggling with affordability, reckless spending that drives up the cost of schools, hospitals and roads is the last thing they need.

Why did this government force ahead with this framework without properly studying the financial impact on Manitoba taxpayers and municipalities?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Honourable Speaker, I'm going to give the PCs a deadline here. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: Yesterday, in the Committee of Supply, they said to pass our budget, so I said, okay, wrap Estimates and we'll go through all the proceedings stages. They delayed. They blocked. They're going to do it again today, and I'm sure they'll do it again for the rest of this week and next week.

So I'm informing you and the members opposite to wrap up all stages of our budget and pass our budget bill by May 28, or we're recalling the House and we will be here throughout June. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions? Grievances?

PETITIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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 Angel Ladiana-Garcia, Chaltu Waday, Joyce Mabini and many, 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:

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

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

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

* (14:40)

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

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

by air from more remote communities to access MRI imaging services.

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

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

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

This petition is signed by Sarah Liere [*phonetic*], Marcy [*phonetic*] Friesen, Gord Zahara and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

Placement Vetting for Elderly Persons Housing

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(5) Proper vetting should include a criminal record check, a vulnerable person record check and the consent of the tenant service co-ordinator and/or the 'mildy'—or building manager of the 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 it—or 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 applicants of people desiring to live in elderly persons housing, EPH, buildings.

This petition has been signed by Evelyn Yelinek, George Lytwyn, Tisha Mitchell and many other Manitobans.

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

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

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

(1) Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC provincial government as a part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction of a 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, addition of an MRI machine.

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

(3) Portage la Prairie is centrally located in Manitoba, is on the No. 1 Highway in the south health—Santé Sud Health Authority. Currently there is only one MRI machine in that 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 the wait times for an MRI scan across this province.

(5) Located around Portage la Prairie are the Dakota Tipi, Dakota Plains, Sandy Bay and the Long Plain First Nations reserves. Indigenous peoples in Canada 'disporporantly' 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 a close proximity of new—the 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.

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

* (14:50)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by Steve Sigurdson, Barb Gillespie and Roland [*phonetic*] Bereza and many other Manitobans.

Breast Screening

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) Based off 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at age 40 will save the Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Provincial Road 210

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition has been signed by Dennis Le, James Au, Kevin Anthony and many, many other Manitobans.

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

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

And the background to this position–petition is as follows:

(1) The federal government has mandated a consumption-based carbon tax, with the stated goal of financially pressuring Canadians to make decisions to reduce their carbon emissions.

(2) Manitoba Hydro estimates that, even with a high-efficiency furnace, the carbon tax is costing the average family over \$200 annually, even more for those with older furnaces.

(3) Home heating in Manitoba is not a choice or a decision for Manitobans to make; it is a necessity of life, with an average of almost 200 days below 0°C annually.

(4) The federal government has selectively removed the carbon tax off of home heating oil in the Atlantic provinces of Canada, but has indicated that they have no intention to provide the same relief to Manitobans heating their homes.

(5) Manitoba Hydro indicates that natural gas heating is one of the most affordable options available to Manitobans, and it can be cost prohibitive for households to replace their heating source.

(6) Premiers across Canada, including the Atlantic Prairie provinces–Atlantic provinces, sorry–that benefit from this decision, have collectively sent a letter to the federal government, calling on it to extend the carbon tax exemption to all forms of heat–home heating, with the exception of Manitoba.

(7) Manitoba is one of the only provincial jurisdictions to have not agreed with the stance that all

Canadians' home heating bills should be exempt from the carbon tax.

(8) Provincial leadership in other jurisdictions have already committed to removing the federal carbon tax from home heating bills.

* (15:00)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove the federal carbon tax on home heating bills for all Manitobans to provide them much-needed relief.

And this petition has been signed by Daryl Finnbogason, Chris Loman [*phonetic*], Wes Taplin and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

Arlington Bridge

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(7) The City undertook extensive public consultation regarding the fate of the Arlington Bridge and

found that the communities on both sides of the bridge were supportive of a replacement structure being built.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we move on to the next petitioner, I'd just like to remind all members that when we're reading out petitions, it is a rule that we read out the first three names on the petition. Not just a practice; it is a rule—a lesson for myself as well.

Intersection of PTH 75 and PR 305

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

And the background to the petition is as follows:

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

(2) Over the past seven years, there have been at least 20 accidents at this location, including 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 of the maintenance issues and short-term strategies identified in the 2022 study are needed.

(7) Development of an action plan with timeliness for medium security—sorry, 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 and other traffic calming designs will help reduce collisions, injuries and fatalities at the intersection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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 Michelle Ham, Chantelle Gauthier, Rom Kibbins and many other fine, fine 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 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.

* (15:10)

(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 Nathan Bucsis, Rhonda Bottrell, Kitrina Adam and many, many more fine 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 to motorists and pedestrians.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This is signed by Robb Fouillard, Jayde Shaw, Carol Shaw and many, many other Manitobans.

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further petitions, grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Deputy honourable Speaker, can you please call all stages of Bill 53.

The Deputy Speaker: It's been announced that we will resume debate at second reading of Bill 53.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

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

The Deputy Speaker: The debate is currently on the referral amendment to the main motion, moved by the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson), standing in the name of the honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot, who has 28 minutes remaining.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): Well, thank you very much to my colleagues for allowing me this opportunity to put a little bit more of my speech onto the record. We rose before break week and so now I have the opportunity to finish my comments. I have to be careful; we want to stay relevant with our comments.

Go, Nighthawks, go, Niverville Nighthawks who did amazing with their championship.

But today we are talking about finances, and as important as finances are to everyone, including the great—there were, in fact, two teams in the Chamber today, young people, because whatever we get wrong here, they will be paying for it. They will pay the price for the kind of debt that we are incurring as elected officials.

In fact, it was Milton Frieman [*phonetic*] who said, and I quote: Budget deficits are merely a form of hidden taxation, either through inflation or borrowing. Deficits are delayed taxation.

And I would suggest that we are seeing that and what Milton Frieman [*phonetic*] said. He said that budget deficits are either inflation, and if you look, today we have the highest inflation in Manitoba, in the country, but even more importantly, the highest food inflation.

Now, members across the way have been heckling about food prices, food prices with their misguided financial plan is now driving inflation in Manitoba. And I'd like to point out to members opposite, not just do we have the highest food inflation in southern Canada; that also includes northern Canada; that also includes Yukon, Northwest Territories. It includes all of Canada.

So let me make this really clear for members opposite, because they do live in ivory towers and don't live in any kind of reality, that means that these jurisdictions have to fly the food up to these locations. It's a lot of added cost onto food, and even with all the added costs onto their food, it is still less expensive than the food here in Manitoba. The inflation on their food is less than the inflation of food here in Manitoba. The food inflation is the highest in the country.

* (15:20)

And go back to what Milton Frieman [*phonetic*] said. He said budget deficits are hidden taxation either through inflation or through borrowing. And we are seeing it in both instances. We are seeing that inflation in Manitoba is now leading the nation. And I would suggest chances are, in most respects, we are probably leading North America, and that is very troubling for families who are sitting in the suburbs and sit around the kitchen table, and you do have to eventually make decisions: are you going to be spending money on food or are you going to spend money on other activities?

The prices of the youth sports are going up. The prices of renovating your home is going up. A vehicle, gas prices are spiralling out of control. We have a government, the Kinew government, which prides itself on the highest gas prices we've seen in a generation probably in the history of this province. I drove by, I saw gas prices starting to inch towards \$2 a litre.

We are very, very expensive as a province, and to say that we took taxes off and then put it back on again, that somehow that was going to be a benefit to the hard-working families; it's not.

So families have a decision to make: where are they going to budget their money? I would suggest to members opposite we are seeing a lot of restaurants that are struggling because the business isn't there like it used to be because families are making a decision whether or not they're going to spend money going out and celebrating or paying for groceries that are spiralling out of control.

So I would caution members opposite, there are indicators—historical indicators that will show you that

high budget deficits will lead to not just borrowing, but also to inflation, and that's what we're seeing in Manitoba.

I don't want to spend too much time on the deficit because others of my colleagues have pointed out how high the deficit in Manitoba is going, and we have an NDP government that—the NDP government that is pointing fingers and trying to blame it on everybody else, but they've been the government for two and a half years and their deficit spending is out of control.

So I know that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe)—who's looking at me a little quizzically, so I want to explain something to him. His boss has indicated, falsely, that we have the lowest deficit in the country, and what they have done is they are comparing the projected deficit, which everyone—everyone has said is clearly a fake projection. The numbers are all skewed; the numbers are off their mark, but they are indicating that the fake projection of what the deficit is, as compared to GDP, is lower than other jurisdictions, and the reason is because other jurisdictions are telling the truth on what their deficits are going to be.

Here in Manitoba—and I was saying before I was interrupted before break week—is, was the member for River Heights, it was Jon Gerrard used to refer NDP budgets as fudgets, and what we've seen is that this NDP government is fudging the deficit numbers for this year and then they're comparing the projected deficit, the fudget-projected deficit, compared to GDP. It is a fake number, and on that they run around, try to pride themselves. It is all based on fudget numbers, on fake numbers.

They do not have the lowest deficit in the country by any stretch of the imagination. It is far greater than that fudget number that they are putting out there right now, and that—by the time we get around to the real numbers coming through, that will be proven.

The number that they've put out there, the projections, if you go through the budget, the projections on what is supposed to be coming in revenue, what the revenue is supposed to be in Manitoba Hydro—and members can go through the budget and look at it and test it against last year or the year before. Don't just test it against what was initially the budget, but what the actual numbers were.

And their projected numbers on what they think their income is going to be is far greater; it is far more ambitious than what the numbers are in actuality from last year or the year before. They are projecting a much greater substantive growth in PST income.

And on the Manitoba Hydro issue, we've seen a few areas have had a decent amount of rainfall. I would say that anything city of Winnipeg south has had a pretty poor rainfall. We've had very little water. For those of us who live outside the city, we measure how things are going with rainfall by how much water is in the ditches, and usually the ditches outside the city are dry. There is simply not enough rain.

And it is that rainfall, it's that runoff that then ends up going to the Red River and all—you know, ends up going through one of our hydro dams and fuels the dams. And that's what happened last year. There was not enough water to run the hydro dams and that's why Manitoba Hydro saw such a decline in their income.

That will be reflected in the budget because they basically put a very rosy recovery in Manitoba Hydro—on the income of Manitoba Hydro. In the summary budget, if you go and you have a look at it, that is pretty ambitious what they think the recovery is going to be in Manitoba Hydro.

Now, can there be a whole series of substantial rainfall—major rainfall taking place and Lake Manitoba, Lake Winnipeg ended up—end up having a lot of water and then that water flows through and runs the dams. That could happen, and we certainly all would wish for that to happen. But wish isn't the way you should be running your projections in a budget.

Usually what you try to do when you budget, you try to—pardon the term—be more conservative with your numbers. And that way then, if the numbers come in better, it just shows a rosier picture. However, if you go with really ambitious, very—if you want to put it—numbers that would struggle with any kind of reality, then afterwards you're going to end up with a much higher deficit number when you come to the end of the year.

Which gets us back to the fudget number of that to Manitoba has the lowest deficit, because you're comparing a fake projection that is built on wishful thinking, and wish does not make good mathematics. Wish does not make a sound basis for a budget. It should have been a far more—for lack of a better word—more conservative approach to the budget with the numbers, a—more to the reality of what might actually happen. And then they—you know, Manitobans might have been facing a number that was a lot higher, and then it could have come in lower had there been—would there be a lot more rain to run the hydro dams.

And the same thing goes with MPI and Liquor & Lotteries, though those numbers tend to be

far more consistent. Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, again, we hope that we don't ever have a series of hailstorms. And the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) will know this—I believe he's the minister responsible for MPI—and he will know that two or three significant hailstorms, and that takes out a lot of the residual money that's contingency money in Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation.

In fact, increasingly, insurance companies in North America and certainly in the mid-US are now indicating that the vehicles in car lots have to be parked under some kind of a cover, whether it's a canvas or otherwise, because the hail damage—the insurance on that is becoming too steep. It's actually cheaper to do some kind of a cover for these vehicles than it is to keep paying out damage repairs.

* (15:30)

So I would suggest to members opposite, this is a serious issue with the way that this budget has been crafted. I would suggest that with high inflation, that's always a bad sign for a government, and the Ministry of Finance should be giving a cautionary note, and I suspect they are.

Treasury Board—the Treasury Board Secretariat should be sending up concerns to the minister and to the government, saying, you know, with high inflation, high debt, a fairly ambitious budget and as far as—and income projections and the rest of it, if anything—any one of those things—goes further sideways, that could end up being detrimental to our bond rating agencies.

In fact, we've gotten warnings already on the—on Manitoba's budget, on the deficits. And bond rating agencies don't just look at what the deficit is; they also look at the ability or the desire by a government, by a group of elected officials, in trying to tame deficit spending, and they are not seeing that because—by the way, anybody can get the financial documents and they're able to see that the numbers that are projected are not reasonable, or they're not realistic.

So bond rating agencies are now starting to look at our financials and saying, high inflation, not accurate forecasting projections, and you have inflation, you've got a high debt. And if they actually downgrade our borrowing even by 0.25 or 0.5, that could end up being a serious hit because it just means that all our debt going forward will then be borrowed at a higher rate.

And we are already spending a lot of money on the interest of what we've borrowed. So it's not just families in—which it is; it's families when they're

sitting at the kitchen table making decisions—but it's also boardrooms across North America who are looking at the finances of Manitoba and saying that, you know, there's going to be a red flag.

And I would suggest to members opposite—the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), the Premier (Mr. Kinew), those individuals who have been given the honour to sit on Treasury Board—you should start listening to your Treasury Board officials. You should start listening to the officials in the Department of Finance. We don't want to see the finances or the ability to borrow—that that credit rating is downgraded because of all of these factors. And I would suggest these are factors that are being created by this NDP government.

And, you know, this is forecast. This is hardly news. I quoted Milton Friedman. He made it very clear that hidden taxation—inflation is one of those hidden taxes. Because what used to be \$100 then, with inflation, ends up becoming \$95 or \$90, \$93, whatever it is. It's a hidden taxation. And I would not callously or just simplify inflation as being just, that's the way it is. The numbers that came out are a warning sign.

And, again, the Minister of Finance chairs Treasury Board. I'm not too sure who his vice-chair is. I don't know who's on Treasury Board. But those are very, very serious positions and should—the burden of those positions are ones that should not be taken lightly. You'll be getting very good advice, and I hope they're allowing their officials—and I know from time in Cabinet, there are incredibly strong and good individuals that work for the people of Manitoba. They play no politics. They're not political; they're apolitical. And they give very strong advice. *[interjection]* And often the advice they give is not necessary to the liking of their elected officials.

And I know the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) is finding this uncomfortable, as he should, because, yes, you know, he's served here for a while. He was, I believe, a staff person under Gary Doer, and so, like, he knows—he's been in opposition; he's government, then opposition and back to government. So he knows that what's being said here is true. And Treasury Board and the Department of Finance will give serious warnings to elected officials.

And my former boss, Brian Pallister, used to say to us, lean on your officials. They are there. They are professionals. And listen to your civil servants because they will give you good advice. And I would suggest to members opposite that they should very seriously listen to Treasury Board and to their finance officials.

I do want to continue on the budget. I know that putting together a budget is difficult. You are juggling a lot of interests. There's a lot of competing interests. You'll have the Department of Health, Department of Families, Justice. You have Social Services, and they have different names for the departments, the different ministries. Infrastructure, very important.

But you also have to keep an eye on that deficit number. And that deficit number is almost like its own Cabinet post, because the amount of interest that's being paid starts to rival some of the smaller departments. There will be ministers in this government who will not have as much budget every year as what is being paid interest on the deficit. And that means that what you're doing is you're denying Manitobans good programs, more money for highways, education, health, social services and all the other departments. Basically, the one department called the deficit department, that's the one that keeps growing, and it ends up becoming a bigger and bigger part of the budget and bigger, bigger piece of the pie.

And I would suggest to members opposite, the Minister of Justice, you know, he's got a very important department. Manitobans want safety. They want to be assured that as they move about, that they do so without being harmed or hurt or whatever their fear is that might happen to them—their home broken into. But if the department of deficit keeps growing, the deficit—the payments on the debt continue to grow, that means you have less money for Justice, less money for Health, less money for highways. So I would suggest to NDP members opposite that they should be keeping an eye on that.

There are a lot of warnings, and we've seen it over the years. Unfortunately, I don't think we're getting a huge uptake from this NDP government. They believe, I guess, money borrowed is not a big deal. But, again, you have to pay it back sometime in that—in reality, deficit spending is simply deferred taxation. At some point in time, you are going to have to raise taxes. So the question is, what are the NDP going to eventually have to raise taxes on?

And I remember very clearly there was the debate between Hugh McFadyen and—it was Premier Selinger, Greg Selinger. Premier Selinger and Hugh McFadyen had a debate, and Hugh McFadyen said to Premier Selinger, you're going to raise the PST. That's the only way you can pay for these deficits and for this huge spending. And Premier Selinger said, read my lips, no new taxes. And he went out and he said to the media, that is ridiculous. We would never raise the PST.

By the time the election was over, that next budget, what they did is they raised PST and they levelled it on far more things. Women's haircuts had PST put on. Your accounting services had PST applied to it. They went and they levelled—everything got PST'd, and then the budget right after that, they raised the PST.

* (15:40)

And again, the question then is to the NDP members opposite: What taxes are you going to raise? I mean, if you're seeing already, because of deficit spending, you're seeing high inflation, you're seeing high deficits, you're seeing a budget that is far too ambitious insofar as the kind of income that's coming in, eventually, then, there's the only other option that a government has, and that's to raise taxes. And we know that the NDP hasn't met a tax yet that they haven't enjoyed raising, and they will have to someday rectify how they're going to do this. Either they're going to spend less, or they're going to raise taxes.

And having been around an NDP government or two—in fact, my good friend Peter Bjornson, who happens to be in the gallery today, former minister of Education. Minister of Highways, I think, even at one point—no, I got that wrong. Well, he was Minister of Education, I remember that. And he will remember the days of the Selinger government, and I think he was as shocked as anybody else when then-Finance minister of the time announced that they were going to raise the PST; I think he was as shocked as everybody else, and he was a victim of that decision.

So I would suggest, colleagues, take a moment and go speak to Peter Bjornson, the former MLA for Gimli. That is correct. He used to have West St. Paul. In fact, I inherited West St. Paul from him and ended up doing incredibly well in West St. Paul.

So I would say to colleagues, if you want to know how a government spirals down with overspending, inflation, raising—rising costs for borrowing and then having no other option but to raise taxes, how that bodes for a political party in a government. He would be able to give you insider information. I think he could probably tell you a lot more interesting things than even I would know about what went on. It would be very interesting. I'm sure when he reads his book—when he writes his book, I want him to know: Peter, I will absolutely buy your book because I want to have the inside track on what took place at that time, and always great to have him here.

So I would like to conclude by cautioning my colleagues across the way, the NDP members, that they should be careful, they should lean a—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Please stop the clock.

Introduction of Guests

The Deputy Speaker: The member from Springfield-Ritchot really stole my thunder, but I would like to acknowledge former member for Gimli, Peter Bjornson, who's in the loge to my right.

Thank you for being here.

And I would ask all members not to engage member—former members in the loge in debate.

* * *

Mr. Schuler: Yes, and I thank you for that reminder because it is hard when you've been adversaries, and then there is life after politics and that actually does fall away.

The Speaker in the Chair

And you know what? I have some interesting stories. We had some good times together. And—anyway, I'm not allowed to reflect, so I won't. And I just want to say to the NDP: You are creating a difficult time for yourselves in that you've got high deficits, you've got a way too rosy and ambitious income in your budget that is probably not reasonable and you have inflation. And I would suggest to the NDP they should be very careful because this could end up exactly like a lot of the NDP governments end up, and that is the days of Greg Selinger and higher taxes.

And I'll leave it that and allow one of the members from the NDP now to get up and put their words on the record.

Thank you.

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): Honourable Speaker, now in the Chair, thank you so much.

Again, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak to the amendment. The member from Interlake-Gimli introduced—regarding Bill 53, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, again, commonly referred to as BITSA.

And, clearly, Honourable Speaker, on the onset, Manitobans deserve better than what is contained in this legislation. They deserve a government that understands the pressure families are currently under in Manitoba today. They deserve a government that respects

taxpayers. And they deserve a government that brings forward meaningful affordability measures instead of simply symbolic gestures and political talking points.

That is why, Honourable Speaker, our PC team is supporting the amendment to refer this particular bill to committee. We know Manitoba is one of the only jurisdictions left that allow Manitobans and stakeholders and families to come to this great building, the public building, and actually debate legislation. Well, it's unfortunate with the NDP that BITSA is not giving that opportunity. There are a number of affordability measures right now that should be addressed and can't be addressed publicly because Manitobans don't have the ability to come and voice some of their concerns from their kitchen table.

And we know that across the province, Manitobans are struggling. Families are watching grocery bills rise every month. Rent is higher, mortgage payments are higher, hydro bills are higher. We know fuel prices are higher. They popped up again today. Transportation costs are up. And we know property taxes are up, specifically education property tax in the city of Winnipeg and across the province to the tune of anywhere from 30 to 40 per cent. Honourable Speaker, we know that that will have a detrimental effect on families sitting around their kitchen table budgeting each and every day. And it's not month now. They're not doing it once a month; they're doing it every day just to afford to put groceries on their table and feed their families.

We know life is becoming more unaffordable under this NDP government. And what does this government offer in response, Honourable Speaker? Pennies—that's right; pennies back on prepared food, pennies back on convenience stores, pennies back on checkout counters.

An Honourable Member: Popcorn.

Mr. Wharton: Pennies back on popcorn, pennies back on chips. And the list goes on.

Manitobans cannot build a future, Honourable Speaker, on pennies. This legislation simply does not provide the meaningful affordability relief Manitoba families actually need and require.

We have now seen a clear pattern from this NDP government, Honourable Speaker, over the last two years particularly. Last year's BITSA raised taxes on Manitobans by eliminating indexing of tax brackets and the basic personal exemption.

That means every year inflation pushes Manitobans into paying more income tax to this Kinew government. The NDP government broke its own campaign promise to index bracket—to index tax brackets. It broke its promise to deliver to the middle class a tax cut and instead of quietly—instead, quietly increased the tax burden on Manitobans.

Honourable Speaker, the NDP talk about affordability while Manitoba families are paying hundreds more in taxes every single year under this Kinew government. And what makes it worse is how they handle this whole process: zero transparency; no accountability; no serious committee review, which would include all Manitobans. They refuse to allow them—Manitobans—to properly present to committee.

We're just coming through committee on a number of issues, some bills coming through the House. Manitobans came—sometimes a dozen, sometimes 20, sometimes two or three; it didn't matter. Every single Manitoban had the right and the ability to come talk either for or against because that's what makes up good democracy. People will come; they'll support policy or they won't support policy.

Well, in this case, they don't have a say. They can't say whether they support the policy of the government or not because the NDP and the Kinew government are just simply not allowing them to.

They refuse to hear from all stakeholders, Honourable deputy Speaker, and that's just shameful. Manitobans deserve the opportunity to point out the real problems contained in this legislation.

* (15:50)

The PCs have made their—our position very clear. We are offering this government a constructive path forward. If this government is really serious about affordability, this will be a true test for the Kinew government.

We have proposed a significant increase to the basic personal exemption so Manitobans can keep more of what they earn every single day. Our proposal, again, would move towards \$30,000 basic personal exemption. That's \$30,000 before a family has to pay income tax to the provincial government. That would put up to \$3,000 back into the pockets of every Manitoba family, Honourable Speaker. That's real affordability measures. That's measures that will help ensure that your child can get to hockey, your child can get to dance, your child can play soccer. They can even go to a movie as a family of four and enjoy a new flick

somewhere, whether be in St. Vital or Maples or anywhere across this great province.

And, Honourable Speaker, this is real relief. This is—this helps pay the mortgage. This is help buying groceries for families and seniors. This is help putting gas in their own vehicle. And let's face it, some folks—some families need two vehicles. They could be spending upwards of six to a thousand dollars a month on fuel alone now. They need real affordability measures to help mitigate some of those day-to-day costs and expenses that they're seeing.

And you'll hear from the NDP that the hydro bill is not going up. Simply not true. Hydro bill is going up every year, an average of 3 and a half to 4 and a half per cent. That's real challenges for families in today's economy.

Kind of—the kind of commitment that the PCs are making will form real commitment and real actual support, every single month, for all families in Manitoba. It would also stimulate Manitoba's economy because families would go out and spend that money in their communities. As I said, take the kids to a show, go out for dinner. They'll also go to local businesses, local restaurants and retailers. Whether it's St. Vital Centre, Kildonan Place, Portage Place—you name it—families want to go; they just can't afford to. They need real affordability measures today. We also know that this affects businesses struggling, operations struggling every day to get people in their door to help grow the economy, Honourable Speaker.

We're hearing the challenges every day. It's just unfortunate that the current government, the Kinew government, is not. The spending from families would support jobs, supports economic growth, and it supports families—the key, Honourable Speaker. We see it across the nation. We see it across North America. Families are struggling. Families need real support. And the PCs are offering an olive branch to the government to say, that's real support; let's help Manitoba families through the toughest—some of the toughest economic times since the pandemic.

Our proposal is practical, it's responsible and is based on a simple principle: Government should allow Manitobans to keep more of their money they earn each and every single day. Not rocket science, Honourable Speaker. It's not pennies. It's dollars. It's hundreds of dollars to families every single day.

And we know that Manitobans—the more and more we're able to talk with Manitobans, consult with Manitobans, they're telling us they're not fooled by

this anymore. They know that their hydro bill is rising, their water bills are rising. They know that they're paying more at the pump. We know that. And we also know, again, that tax bills are gone up. That's probably one of the biggest hits right now to families—and seniors. We cannot forget seniors on fixed income, Honourable Speaker.

Seniors are there; they get their tax bill; they opened them up last week from the City of Winnipeg. They open it up and see, oh my gosh, I'm paying \$600 more a year for education property tax on my assessed value of my home, a home that I worked for 40, 50 years to pay off. Finally got to a position where I can afford to keep the lights on, keep the heat on, get to the grocery store once a week. I can't afford a car anymore because MPI is too high. I have to take a bus. I'm not a senior—well, I am a senior—I need to get on a bus; I still have to pay for it, of course, and that costs money. And seniors are feeling that pinch every day.

Stakeholders in Manitobans, restaurants industry, have raised serious concerns about this bill. We've heard it. We know that restauranters have been struggling since the—since COVID. We know it's been a challenge for a better part of five years to continue to even keep their doors open and their lights on, let alone even attract staff.

We know that labour right now is leaving our province, particularly young labour, students, folks that help not only themselves by getting a job in this particular industry, they're finding it tough to survive here, so they're moving on; they're moving to other provinces.

You know, the minister—one of the ministers commented on Saskatchewan licence plates coming here. Well, Manitoba licence plates are headed to Saskatchewan because they just can't afford to live under this Kinew government anymore. That's why we're offering real savings for Manitoba families, which includes our kids that are in university and college that are trying to upgrade; they're taking a trade; you know, they're doing the things to better themselves so they can maybe one day afford a house.

Well, if we upped their basic personal amount, they're going to keep more of that money so that they can do that; they can look at getting married. Getting married these days, for young kids, are 50, 70 thousand dollars; it's unbelievable the amount of money just to get married these days. Well, they're probably going to be eloping more and more under the NDP government because they can't afford to have a wedding here;

it's as simple as that. And we know that they're already taxing the death of people; they'll probably be taxing 'weddies'—weddings soon as well.

Stakeholders in Manitoba, again, are concerned about the restaurants. Restaurateurs are concerned about this legislation. Under the legislation, prepared food—so that grocery stores and convenience stores will become exempt for the PST. So we can go into Safeway, pick up a ready-made sandwich and a salad and save pennies at the teller. But if I wanted to go down to a local restaurant and get a prepared sandwich from them—maybe they have different options—I know I'm going to be paying those pennies still there.

So the—it's more about balance, when you try to balance out, I guess, fairness, when it comes to taxation and policy. And this particular bill is just not fair to Manitobans, particularly restaurateurs, the folks that drive our economy.

We know that the restaurateurs spend tens of millions of dollars a year in just helping with—the GDP of restaurants here in the city is unbelievable. They are big economic drivers, and they actually support the things that are important to Manitobans, like health care, education, social services, and the list goes on, Honourable Speaker. We know that without those businesses continuing to open their doors every day and support Manitobans, we're not going to have Manitobans be here anymore.

Families can't afford to even support the restaurateur anymore. And if they do get into a situation, it's 5:30 and they got a hockey game or practice or a dance lesson at 6:30, they're going to run into Safeway and save pennies. Well, they only do that out of habit; they're not going to make that extra trip to the restaurant, for sure now, because they've been pitted against the Safeways and the Sobeys of the world. So they can't afford to go to the restaurant and support local; they've got to go to the larger food chains and pick up that sandwich or that salad or, in the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) words, the rotisserie chicken.

It's more and more evident as we go through this bill that the government is picking winners and losers; there's no doubt about it. They have a history of doing that, and they continue to do that. And, again, the losers in this case are the restaurateurs. We know that restaurant workers in Manitoba communities depend on these businesses.

I've lived in Winnipeg; I was born and raised in Winnipeg. I moved out to rural Manitoba in 1998. Been out there for a number of decades now. I love both.

City has its—has what it has to offer, and rural Manitoba has what it has to offer, and they're both excellent. You combine them and you got the best of both worlds here in Manitoba. And we want to continue that. That's—we've got a beautiful place to live. We've got everything at our disposal, but we need to ensure that we remain affordable so that Manitobans don't start looking east-west. We don't want that, Honourable Speaker.

* (16:00)

We want to make sure that we have an environment here that will continue to ensure that Manitobans, particularly our young Manitobans, decide to set down roots here and have the ability to, and that personal basic amount, or that exemption to \$30,000 is going to be very helpful for them in making that decision, whether they strap on a licence plate that says Saskatchewan or Alberta on it, or buys through MPI and puts on a Manitoba plate—personal plate, I love Manitoba. That's what's important to this side of the House; I'm not sure about the Kinew government.

It's just simply unfair to separate the two, Honourable Speaker; it really is. Restaurants support approximately \$3.5 billion in annual sales across Manitoba. Even my colleague, the member from Lac du Bonnet's ready to go pick up a sandwich at the restaurant. I know that because we talked about that. More than 42,000 Manitobans work in restaurant industry. Isn't that amazing—42,000. It's just incredible how many restaurateurs, how many people work in the restaurant industry. Unbelievable—unbelievable. It's just incredible.

Restaurants, by the way, are among the most labour-intensive sectors in our economy, supporting millions of dollars in jobs right across this great province. These are local businesses, Honourable Speaker, let's be clear. These are local businesses that make a difference. They're family-owned businesses. They're the first jobs for Manitoba students. I remember when I got out of high school I went right into the restaurant business—unbelievable.

An Honourable Member: One-room schoolhouse.

Mr. Wharton: One-room schoolhouse—yes, and that wasn't important. And I can tell you it was a great experience. It was a wonderful experience. It actually introduced me to the opportunity to meet people. They came in the restaurant. We said, oh, how can we help you? We did all those great things. We served them

their meal, got to know them. Matter of fact, they ended up being a neighbour. It's amazing.

And that was in Winnipeg, not even rural Manitoba. That's why I'm saying the difference between rural and urban is very subtle—very subtle. People know your neighbour. They usually know their neighbour, and where do they meet their neighbour? Ha, at a coffee shop or a restaurant. I can tell you that, Honourable Speaker.

As long as they're not going to buy a sandwich there, at the Petersfield Hotel, we know that they're going to have to buy one at Safeway and save pennies on the dollar. That's just not fair to those small businesses in rural Manitoba.

This government is introducing a policy that, again, actively shifts consumer demand away from restaurants towards other competitors—simply not good policy. I know that the ability for us here, on this side of the House, to get up and remind members opposite, you know, particularly the backbenchers, the upper benchers, the folks that do the work. I was there, too, an upper bencher for a year and a half, and I can tell you, you have a lot of say as upper benchers in government. You can sit there and you can talk around caucus and say, you know what? Maybe we should amend this bill. Maybe we should look at helping not only Sobeys and Safeway, but maybe we should look at the restaurateur and helping them out, and ensuring that they can remain open and keep their lights on.

So when they—when the government taxes meals differently, you know, they're basically—they're creating winners and losers, and that's just simply not right. They're limiting the ability based on where Manitobans buy their food. So, again, much like the MJA, their forced union, they're forcing people to go to large shopping centres to buy their premade sandwiches, which just isn't right.

Honourable Speaker, there are many other unanswered questions in this legislation. There are questions about changes to the film tax credit. *[interjection]* I know the Minister of Education would like to get up and I'm going to give her the opportunity as soon as I'm done. I've got 10 minutes left and I welcome her to put some comments on the record, or anybody from the government side, as a matter of fact, would be—well, it would be delightful to listen to what they say, especially after what they've heard from Manitobans. I mean, we're messengers for Manitobans. We're passing on what they're saying. This is written by Manitobans, Honourable Speaker.

So we're happy to be here, and 30 minutes, quite frankly, just isn't enough. *[interjection]* And, you know, again the member—the Minister of Education is heckling me, and that's fine. She has nothing better to do because education is failing, 10th out of 10 in the province, so.

And I can understand why she gets defensive, Honourable Speaker, because she agrees with me. She agrees that this is just not fair legislation. We agree that \$30,000 basic personal exemption is something that Manitobans can afford. You know, with her six-and-a-half, seven-figure salary, she obviously has no issues with going to the Shell station and filling up her car. Matter of fact she doesn't pay for it. And she's got an electric car. So she doesn't have to worry about that, Honourable Speaker.

So there are many unanswered questions. There are many unanswered questions about this legislation. There are questions about changes to the film tax credit. While these changes increase bureaucracy, will they discourage investment? Yes, they will. They absolutely will. Will they create more red tape? They certainly will. How exactly will these taxes operate? Who will be affected? What protections exist? I bet you the Minister of Education doesn't have answers for these, but I'll give her the opportunity to.

There are questions about allowing municipalities to impose accommodation taxes on short-term rentals. There are a number of questions that come up particularly under this bill, and, again, everything in here will affect Manitoba families every single day. Will there be limits? Will there be oversight? How high can these taxes go?

Well, we know under the NDP they can continue to grow pretty quickly. You know, raising the PST is total nonsense, according to the former premier, Greg Selinger, but we know that's not far off the radar of this Kinew government. Will this increase debt? Absolutely. Will taxpayers face additional liabilities? One hundred per cent. Would borrowing not be managed centrally by the Province? No way. These are serious questions, Honourable Speaker, and they deserve answers.

We try to get answers every day for Manitobans based on the questions they write for us, and we're not—simply not getting them, and we'll continue to do that and stand on behalf of every Manitoba. They deserve more than just rushed legislation and no debate. They deserve to go to committee under my colleague, the Interlake-Gimli member, and have a discussion and be able to voice their concerns about

Bill 53. We know hydro bills are increasing, MPI rates are increasing, natural gas rates have increased dramatically. Gasoline prices remain painfully high after the government cancelled the fuel tax holiday. They'll try to tell you that they gave you a whopping percentage off the pump. They didn't. Again, it was window dressing, Honourable Speaker.

At the same time, private capital investment in Manitoba is declining. We know that. The numbers are out. We've had the member from Borderland, spoke about it and ask questions the other day. Never got an answer. Why? Why, Minister, why are people leaving this province? Why is Manitoba's economy and investment declining? Businesses are losing confidence. We know that, we hear it. We hear it from the Winnipeg chamber, we hear it from the Manitoba chamber. Entrepreneurs are looking elsewhere. We heard that too, again.

Saskatchewan–Manitoba plates on Manitoba cars. Shameful. Skilled workers continue to leave. They're looking for lower taxes and stronger economic growth. We know that the basic personal exemption will help every Manitoban. These are questions asked by Manitobans through us, through the opposition. That's what opposition does. We ask questions of the government so that collectively this Chamber can make decisions that better all Manitobans, and that's why we're here today, to discuss this. This is why we're here every day.

Right now, Manitobans are falling behind neighbouring provinces. Again, we talk about Saskatchewan and Alberta lowering their taxes, and they're competing aggressively for workers and investment. We know that. The New West Partnership was signed during our time in government. We know that we share services. Why don't we just simply open up our borders for trade as well? Certainly would help our young entrepreneurs, our crafting sector, our manufacturing sector, trade internally within the province of Manitoba, grow the economies locally, Honourable Speaker. That's how we'll make a real difference. That's how we can save Manitoba families and help young kids stay here and grow, have children, get married, raise families and have a successful time and life in Manitoba.

It's more and more hard every day for families to get ahead in Manitoba under this Kinew government. And what is especially troubling, Honourable Speaker, is that the government appears to believe symbolic announcements are enough. They're not, simply not. Action is what this government needs to provide for

Manitobans, action. We need action in a whole host of areas. We need action in health care. We need action on the economy. We need action in education. And we know that's simply not happening under the Kinew government.

* (16:10)

Manitobans are always asking for more, and they're getting less. Why is life becoming more expensive in Manitoba in the first place? Good question. Good question that we ask the government every day. Why are taxes increasing? Again, why are utility costs going up? Why are young Manitobans leaving?

Well, Honourable Speaker, that's why our PC team continues to advocate for broad-based tax relief, because broad-based tax relief treats Manitoba families fairly—and all Manitobans—seniors, you name it, workers. Our PC plan does not pick winners and losers. It does not favour one industry over another and it does not force families to change their behaviour to qualify for small government incentives. And that's exactly what Bill 53 does, provides small pennies—pennies—to say, please stay here in Manitoba. Please, please stay in Manitoba. Pennies will help. No, they won't. They will not. Real affordability measures makes a difference for all Manitobans and will continue to.

And that's why we're here discussing this bill today. Our proposal to significantly increase the basic personal exemption would help Manitobans with exactly that measure. It would help the nurse. It would help the tradespeople or person. It would help teachers. Even the member—or the Minister of Education, it would help. It would help the truck driver. It would help the young family trying to buy their first home and it would help serious seniors trying to stay ahead of rising costs, which is a challenge. And it—yes, it would help firefighters, too—yes, yes.

Honourable Speaker, I also want to address the government's approach to the Education Property Tax. This is the most important one. The NDP government likes to talk about increasing Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit from \$1,600 to—my clock is back now, there it is—to \$1,700. But, while they announce a future \$100 increase and Education Property Tax continues to rise dramatically, the government is collecting hundreds of millions of dollars more in Education Property Tax revenue than just a few years ago.

So Manitobans are paying substantially more overall while receiving relatively little back in return.

Can we just say pennies, Honourable Speaker? We know that. Once again, that tax relief is simply not there. Families are struggling today, cannot wait for affordable relief from the Kinew government. They need help now. They need help today.

And while putting education tax on property and passing the concerns or the issues off to local school boards is dead wrong. Take accountability for your actions, particularly the Minister of Education, who'll have to start to fund—they have to start to fund education properly; it's as simple as that. Don't put it on seniors' properties. Don't put it on middle-income families' properties. Just fund education appropriately. And I know the Education Minister is anxious to get up too, as well.

Honourable Speaker. I have so much more I would like to get on the record, but unfortunately I see my time is running down. But I will—maybe the Minister of Advanced Ed would like to get up, too, and put a few words on the record, but I doubt it because all they like to do over there is just da da da da da, close colleges.

Honourable Speaker, I'm going to give you one last thing: Given the concerns raised by Manitobans today, yesterday, and for the last two and a half years, Manitobans need a real government that'll apply and give affordability to all Manitobans—won't pick winners and losers. Let's make a difference. Let's do the amendment today.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I want to take a moment and say thank you to the member from Red Rither [*phonetic*]-Red River North and the member from Springfield-Ritchot for putting some words on the record here today.

And I also want to say thank you for the opportunity to get my words put on the record, too, in speaking to bill 33-Bill 53, sorry, the budget implementation tax statute amendment act, and speak in support of our PC amendment to refer this legislation to the— for proper public review and accountability.

And I just want to take a moment and thank the constituents of Agassiz. I have the opportunity every weekend, every week I'm at home, to engage and have very open dialogue with these members of Agassiz and talk about some of the issues and concerns that they have.

And, of course, the most recent being that of the Manitoba jobs agreement act, this—that is very topical

today, that we're hearing from other stakeholders, tradespeople, and—anyway, I just want to say thank you to those that have come forward with their concerns in the constituency of Agassiz.

Manitobans deserve better than what they're getting from this NDP government. Along with my constituents and those that I've heard from, it's—Manitobans, they all deserve better than this rushed legislation. They deserve better than backroom decision making. Backroom decision making—that's what this is, Honourable Speaker. They deserve far better than a government that refuses to listen to Manitobans before forcing legislation through. They didn't do proper consultation. We've seen that not just with this BITSA bill, but with other legislation that has been jammed through.

Over the past two and a half years, we've watched this government repeatedly jam massive omnibus budget bills through with very little to zero debate, little scrutiny and absolutely no meaningful public consultation. The NDP have turned BITSA into a legislative dumping ground, and we see that very evident again here. They have used procedural tricks to limit debate, they've repeatedly refused to allow Manitobans to appear before committee and share how these decisions impact their day-to-day lives here in the province. And this is not transparency. It's not democracy. It's not accountability that working Manitobans are looking for.

And that's why we on this side of the House have brought forward this amendment asking on this government to bring this to committee so that the Manitobans that we are hearing from and the ones that this NDP government are ignoring can actually come to a public forum and have their voice heard.

We're asking for something simple, and this is very reasonable: let Manitobans be heard, let the stakeholders speak, let families speak, let small businesses speak, let municipalities speak, let the taxpayers of Manitoba an opportunity to speak. This affects every single one of us here in the province of Manitoba.

Time and time again, this NDP government drafts legislation in isolation and, again, backroom deals, ignoring stakeholders, ignoring the concerns, forcing this through. And later, quite often they have to go back and fix the mess that they created in the first place, renege on some of the things, because, oh, now, you know, opposition, we bring things forward. And then they have to sit back and reconsider: Oh, maybe we should have, you know, done better at consulting

and talking to Manitobans and taking the time to really listen and not ignore.

And we see it repeatedly: bills introduced without that proper consultation, and bills being criticized by the experts and stakeholders and opposed by industries, bills requiring revisions, again, like I mentioned, after there is public backlash.

* (16:20)

And I know I mentioned how, most recently, I've heard from constituents in relation to the MJA, and this past weekend, I heard it from key stakeholders. I was actually talking to tradespeople, people on the front line. These were contractors. These were actually electricians. Some were plumbers. As a matter of fact, that—this will affect—this MJA will affect these people in rural Manitoba, actually right across our province. They're disgusted with what this can do to businesses across the province. Many were not consulted on this.

Again, this government picks to meet with those who they want and not necessarily those who may be opposed to or have some criticisms or objections to what the legislation is. They're not necessarily open to hearing some of the criticisms, or work with those individuals to make a better impact to help build the legislation.

Not just with MJA, but other bills too. We've heard at committee many times over where this government has not done proper consultation. And I feel like I'm sort of fixated on that, because that is what we see from this NDP government. They get up here in the Chamber and talk about the thousands of people that they have consulted with, where, in fact Honourable Speaker, they have not consulted with thousands of people. They have maybe met with a handful of people or a selected organization or stakeholder group, certainly not the thousands that they preach and say that they have done so with.

I heard from stakeholders in the Department of Families. We heard at committees with the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) that many stakeholders, when some of these bills come to committee, they have not been consulted on in legislation. And this is just another fine example coming forward where it's only deserving that Manitobans and the stakeholders impact get that opportunity to speak and be consulted with.

And, again, with BITSA, we're watching the same movie here over and over again. It's shocking that this budget bill is not simply what's in it, but it's what's

missing from it. Manitobans are struggling right now in every constituency. And I know members on the other side of the House, they must be getting calls to their constituency offices as well from individuals, families, businesses that are struggling in this affordability crisis.

It's not isolated to just one community or one certain area; it's certainly felt right across our province here. Families are struggling to afford groceries, struggling to afford rent, struggling to afford fuel and struggling with hydro rates. Higher hydro rates, higher property taxes, higher school taxes, higher transportation costs and rising everyday expenses.

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) travels around Manitoba boasting about removing PST on snack foods and prepared grocery items. Meanwhile, Manitobans are being crushed by rising taxes and rising costs everywhere else. A family of four might—might—save \$10 a month on chips, pop or a rotisserie chicken. And again, this weekend, I chatted with individuals on this very subject; it came up about the PST coming off some of these grocery items. This doesn't really necessarily hit the pocketbooks of every family across our province. This is not something that is going to provide the real relief, the real break that many of Manitoba families need to see.

And, you know, not to say what this does for the restaurant industry here in our province of Manitoba, and I know members have stood up and made reference to that on a number of occasions, but the restaurant industry is significant in our province. It's a—excuse me.

Meanwhile, education property taxes continue to skyrocket—increases, and we're seeing that. Community members—or constituents in the city of Winnipeg are seeing those tax bills hit their mailboxes now. And hydro rates are continuing to increase. MPI costs continue to rise, and I know constituents have reached out to me and shared their experiences that, you know what, they aren't able to not only license their car, but they wouldn't be able to even put the fuel in it with the rising costs of fuel.

This government cancelled the indexation of tax brackets and the basic personal amount, creating a stealth tax in—stealth hike on every Manitoban. And the NDP promised they would not raise taxes, and guess what? They've broken that promise. They broke that promise. They broke the promise to index tax brackets. They broke the promise on a middle-class tax cut. They promised to freeze hydro rates, and guess

what, Honourable Speaker? They broke that promise too.

The reality is this government has been taking more money out of Manitobans' pockets every single year through bracket creep and higher property taxes while pretending to give affordability relief through token measures that barely make a difference. They take away from Manitobans far more than what any of their savings relief plans can offer.

That's why our PC caucus has clearly said that real changes need to happen. We need to have real support. That's why our amendment says that it be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs so we can hear from real people and the real impact that this has on this affordability crisis. This legislation fails Manitoba families—not only fail them but the opportunity to speak.

We've also said something important: We're prepared to work constructively and collaborate and work together on this. If this government is serious about affordability, then this is the test. We've proposed some action. We've proposed increasing the basic personal amount to \$30,000 over time with an immediate increase. That would put real money back into Manitobans' pockets. This would add more money per year for families and for individuals and a significant amount for a two-family income. It's a real solution with real results and can give everyone affordability relief. And this would not be picking winners and losers. This would be serving everybody.

This would put more money on the tables of Manitoba families. It would provide more money for groceries. It would provide more money for rent, more money for children's clothing, money for that transportation and the extra costs associated with the higher fuel and money for everyday bills which would, again, help with the increase in hydro cost.

This, Honourable Speaker, all goes back to our local economy so it gets fed right back into our communities and helping out on that level. Unlike the NDP's penny politics, our proposal would create broad-based tax relief that helps every working Manitoba. The NDP penny politics—Manitoba families don't need those penny politics. They need real relief and immediate relief.

A \$30,000 basic personal tax amount would become the highest in Canada. It would make Manitoba more attractive for workers, more attractive for entrepreneurs and business owners as well as professionals, and more competitive with provinces like Alberta and

Saskatchewan. Instead, this NDP government is making Manitoba less competitive, and they're clawing back benefits, increasing taxes and adding red tape and creating uncertainty for local business and residents.

And I believe I've heard it in here before where, you know what, if a business wants to grow, they have to go, because under this NDP government it's not going to happen here in the province of Manitoba. Only the NDP could think a solution to affordability is taxing Manitobans more. And I know the member from Borderland likes to use this saying: The NDP have never met a tax that they didn't like. And it's true. It's true. They love to tax.

* (16:30)

We also need to talk about the process because process matters. This Legislature exists so legislation can be debated carefully, reviewed thoroughly and improved where necessary. And, as opposition parties, we have a responsibility to hold government accountable, and this is what the role of opposition is. We ask questions, we—and bring forward and speak when legislation is weak, flawed or incomplete. We have the responsibility to demand better, and that's what we are doing.

This motion to refer BITSA to committee is entirely reasonable, and we've heard that from Manitobans. They want the opportunity to have input on legislation. We—they want the opportunity to come and present and, you know, that's where ideas are born as well. And collaborative working relationships can come from that as well. In fact, our caucus proposed legislation last year: bill 224, the budget public—The Budget Bill Public Accountability Act, which would have required public committee hearings.

And what did the NDP do? They rejected it. Why? Because the government doesn't like the scrutiny when it applies to them. They don't want to debate or engage in respectful debate discussions. They like to thrash personal attacks and irrelevant jargon to deflect from real questions and accountability. They like accountability for everyone else but not accountability for themselves, Honourable Speaker. And that is not transparency. And Manitobans are starting to notice.

You know, if this government truly believes in affordability measures, then why are they afraid of bringing this forward to committee and taking those measures? Why are they afraid to hear from businesses, from stakeholders, municipalities, taxpayers, workers?

Perhaps they already know that Manitobans are not impressed and they would have to answer real questions.

We've seen stakeholder criticism emerge across Manitoba. Restaurants Canada has raised serious concerns about the unfair PST changes proposed in this legislation. And under the NDP plan, prepared food sold in grocery stores would become PST exempt why identical prepared food sold in restaurants would still be taxed. Honourable Speaker, food is food. Why should a rotisserie chicken in a grocery store be tax exempt while the same product sold in a local restaurant remains taxed?

Who loses, Honourable Speaker? Local restaurants, small businesses, workers, youth employees, communities that depend on those jobs. Restaurants Canada warn this policy creates a clear imbalance in the marketplace and threatens thousands of jobs.

And I know the member from Red River North touched on this as well, that the restaurant sector employs and supports 40,000–42,000 jobs in Manitoba. It is livelihood. It is employment. This is family. This has an impact. The NDP drafted, again, this policy without consulting restaurant industry owners, operators. And that is exactly another reason why committees matter, so that public can have input in this legislation.

On that topic, again, we've seen—since the NDP took office, we've seen where they've gone out, they've put—introduced this legislation, they've done the announcement, they've got the photo op, and then all of a sudden we start to hear from stakeholders. We start to hear from those that are impacted by this. And the NDP have to go back, renege on that legislation and say, hmm, you know what, maybe we need to do some more consulting here.

And this goes back to early on where there was Green Team funding. Everybody remember that, the Green Team funding? And we had to—we heard from stakeholders regarding that. With the gas tax, that was another one. And security rebates—security rebates—because, again, they leave out certain sectors without consulting. And I believe some of the members here have mentioned this as well, but this NDP government, they aren't here to serve all of Manitobans. They pick and choose who they want to serve across the province.

But, you know, the bigger and more broader concerns with this budget is the deficit. The deficit in this province is incredible, and it is projected for this year to be nearly half a billion dollars. Manitobans have

every reason to doubt this NDP government and the numbers because this Finance Minister has missed every deficit projection since taking office, every single one. Last year's projected deficit was supposed to be around \$800 million, but guess what? It doubled.

The NDP have already added nearly \$5 billion to Manitoba's debt in less than three years. And guess who pays for that? Guess who's going to be paying for that? We are. All of us here in this Chamber are going to be paying for that, along with our younger generation—those that were in the gallery today—will be paying for that.

You know, members from the opposite side here have every opportunity to get up and speak to this. I don't know why they're not taking that opportunity when it can happen, but they choose not to.

We can see here in the province of Manitoba as well, where private capital investment is declining. Businesses are losing confidence in this NDP government and going elsewhere to maybe start up a business or relocate one that's already existing here. Manitoba continues falling behind other provinces in economic growth.

Many organizations that typically support government spending were disappointed. Affordability advocates questioned whether grocery PST measures would really be meaningful to help Manitobans regardless of what their tax bracket is. So where is the support? It fell flat on so many levels, Honourable Speaker. People are hungry. People are hungry for real relief in business, in agriculture, in taxes, in education, in health, in families, but nothing is coming to help provide that relief.

Also concerning are the measures involving the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology. The government failed through poor planning and instability, and now they're giving 'themsower'—themselves powers to appoint an administrator and redistribute assets. This government likes to talk about supporting trades and skilled workers, yet they are overseeing the collapse of an important educational institute. Again, there's no transparency, there's no clear long-term planning, and there's, again, very little or zero consultation.

The hypocrisy with this NDP government is astounding. It brings me to the point of the Manitoba jobs 'agreement' again, here, Honourable Speaker, having a significant impact on the trades and jobs across Manitoba. NDP government ignores the very workers and stakeholders that are to be delivering

services and building our province. MJA increases the cost of every project, and for what? All this does is pay big union bosses at the top; that's all it does. It does nothing for the people doing the work; it's just adding cost to big projects here in our province of Manitoba.

Manitobans are watching this government increase the school taxes, and I know I've already touched on that, but, again, it needs to be stressed that every one of us in this Chamber are going to be feeling the effects of increased taxes in so many areas. We've—I've already mentioned that: the property tax, the fuel tax. We're getting taxed every time we turn around. Tax, tax, tax, Honourable Speaker.

* (16:40)

Manitobans understand that thousands, real money—we need to see real tax relief, and it needs to be more significant than the tiny PST penny savings that this NDP government has introduced on snack foods. They continue to ignore the broader economic picture.

We are all living through economic uncertainty, global instability. We're all seeing trade disruptions, tariff pressures and a rising cost in agriculture and transportation. Yet there's almost nothing in Bill 53 for economic growth here in our province of Manitoba. Nothing for mining strategy, exploration, agriculture. There is no incentives for investments. Instead, Manitoba businesses continue facing higher taxes, more regulation and less certainty.

This government seems to believe economic growth simply happens automatically, but it doesn't. In Manitoba, growth requires confidence, growth requires competitiveness, growth requires investment and stable policy. That is not what this bill provides. The NDP are delivering nothing—nothing. None of these things are delivered in this.

And we're asking—what we're asking for here today is reasonable: we're asking for transparency; we're asking for some accountability; we're asking for real affordability measures; and we're asking for Manitobans to have a voice in doing so.

And the government controls the timeline here. And we can improve this legislation, and they can bring forward meaningful increase to the basic personal amount. They can listen to stakeholders. They can send this bill to committee. They can work constructively with us here. But, instead, they seem determined to force through this legislation.

And I just want to be clear, Honourable Speaker. I want Manitobans to know that the NDP can implement many of their proposed PST changes without opposition support. Their own history proves it. What's really—what this is really about, Honourable Speaker, is political theatre. They want headlines about grocery savings while avoiding serious discussion about broader tax.

Families don't want or need political theatre. They need leadership, and that means delivering meaningful relief, listening to Manitobans, means democratic process and respecting that, something this government knows nothing about. They say they're a listening government, but it's clearly becoming more evident, and that is selective hearing that this government has. This government's failed on all accounts, Honourable Speaker.

If this government is serious about affordability, then this is the moment to prove it. Raise the basic personal amount, put real money back into Manitobans' pockets, stop punishing working families through bracket creep, stop forcing legislation and let Manitobans finally have their say. And that's why we are asking that this be put forward with our amendment to the Legislative committee for public input and public scrutiny and an opportunity to speak to this bill.

Thank you.

The Speaker: No other members wishing to debate?

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Honourable Speaker, it's absolutely a pleasure to be able to stand up and put a few words on the record in regards to the motion put forward by my good friend and colleague, the member for Gimli-Interlake, and it's interesting that the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie)—and that's why I took a few seconds before I got up to speak.

I wanted to thank my good friend and colleague, the member—the MLA for Agassiz, for putting forward some wonderful words on the record. I know that there was some heckling as soon as I got up. I'm not sure if it's heckling or cheering from the member for Keewatinook, my good friend and neighbour, the minister who's the MLA for Keewatinook.

An Honourable Member: I'm not your friend.

Mr. Ewasko: He says he's not my friend. That's okay, Honourable Speaker. My—I guess my friends list is full up anyway, so it's good. So I appreciate that.

So let's get back to the motion on hand that we're speaking to today. I mean, of course, you know, when

the Bill 53 was brought forward, the Finance Minister spoke for a resounding almost four minutes, and not too many of his colleagues would get up to put any words on the record. But that's nothing new with you-know-who, the Kinew government and their MLAs that are here, Honourable Speaker.

So the motion that was brought forward by the member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson) says that he moved, and seconded by the other member, that the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word that and substituting the following. So the motion reads as follows: Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, be not now read a second time, but that the order for second reading be discharged, the bill withdrawn from the Order Paper and the subject thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

An Honourable Member: Sounds reasonable.

Mr. Ewasko: Sounds very reasonable, Honourable Speaker. And it's interesting that none of the government MLAs really want to put any words even on the motion. You would think that they would want to see the BITSA bill go forward to committee so that we could hear from the public on the displeasures that Manitobans have on not only Bill 53 but of the NDP's budget.

And so I know that just yesterday I had the opportunity to be in Estimates on the Education and Early Childhood Learning file, and we're asking some questions to the to the minister; and lots of questions, very few answers. But the minister did put something on the record yesterday, Honourable Speaker, that she was in favour of freezing the PST on groceries.

So, it's interesting, Honourable Speaker, that the minister chooses this type of language, which, again, one more time, it seems that the Education and Early Childhood Learning Minister seems to be offside with the Premier (Mr. Kinew), just using different types of languages. I'm not sure if maybe they don't even get a chance to have a conversation, but we've seen more than—on more than one occasion where it's just absolutely inconsistent.

So, you know, when we start talking about affordability, we start talking about different things that could and should be happening in this great province of ours, and not just pennies—penny politics like what's happening with the Kinew government, but it's, in fact, talking about how school divisions have been cut this year yet again by this Education Minister.

I mean, I don't know why the minister doesn't actually speak to some of the trustees who are elected in various school divisions, because I'm sure that some of the trustees have shared their displeasure with the minister.

I mean, you don't have to look too far but to see what happens in Louis Riel School Division where they said, and I quote—in regards to this year's education funding, Louis Riel School Division said: Our financial position has eroded.

I don't know, Honourable Speaker. I don't think that's a very positive spin on this Education Minister's funding. Yet again, she has gone and cut education funding not only to Louis Riel School Division, but I've got now, like, 25 minutes, so we'll be speaking to this, and maybe that'll even give, you know, the Education Minister incentive to maybe stand up and put a few words on the record.

But I think what happens not only with the Minister of Education but also many of the other ministers and backbenchers on the NDP side. I think that some of them are just too worried to stand up because they don't want to say necessarily the wrong thing on the record.

* (16:50)

Because many of them—I mean, many of them on a day-to-day basis, they're clapping quite loudly in hopes that the Premier might get—they might get the Premier's attention and maybe be shuffled into a Cabinet position, something along those lines. *[interjection]*

But, Honourable Speaker—*[interjection]*—it sounds like—*[interjection]*—the Minister—

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —for Education. *[interjection]*

Some Honourable Members: Question.

An Honourable Member: Honourable Speaker, you did say order, so I was doing what you had said, and I paused the speech.

The Speaker: The honourable member did take his seat. The Speaker was not standing, so, therefore, the honourable member is done his speaking.

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: Order.

The honourable member took his seat. Speaker was not standing. The Speaker did not interrupt anything. Therefore, the honourable member is done speaking.

Are there other members wishing to speak?

Ms. Byram: On a point of order.

Point of Order

The Speaker: The honourable member for Agassiz (Ms. Byram), on a point of order.

Ms. Byram: Honourable Speaker, we did clearly hear you say—call things to order.

An Honourable Member: No.

Ms. Byram: So—yes, he—sorry. We on the—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Ms. Byram: What we heard on this side of the House was you call things to order.

So, respectfully, the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) took his seat when you called order.

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation, on the same point of order?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): On the same point of order.

The Speaker: On the same point of order.

Mr. Moses: Very clearly, the Speaker spoke to object to the noise in the room, and I believe I heard you say something to that effect, following which, it was—very clearly, you did not stand. This is the matter of regular course in this Chamber. The Speaker may make comments to ensure that there is orderly conduct in the House.

But, very clearly, as happens every single day in this House, the Speaker did not stand. When the Speaker does not stand, he did not require any member to stop their speech. The ensuing action was that the member who had the floor sat down. And that is the common practice of ceding and concluding his comments and ceding his time.

So I would ask the—following that, when, you know, some continued conversation happened, Speaker, in your—just made some comments, the fact that you agreed that the member sat down when the Speaker was not standing and therefore concluded his comments.

And so we feel that the member opposite does not have a point of order and that the Speaker's previous statement that the member for Lac du Bonnet concluded his remarks, should stand and that we should move on with debate. If there's no more speakers, we should call the question.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order?

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order.

Yes, obviously, this is a misunderstanding. We hear order being called in this Chamber very, very often. And sometimes it should be called a little bit more often, and so the member—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I would advise the honourable Opposition House Leader that he should not be commenting on the actions of the Chair.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, so the member was obviously a little cautious as he was being called to order, as he has been ejected not too long ago and is obviously being very cautious—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: —and is obviously being very cautious with his wording. And when he heard the word order, he sat down. And I believe it was called numerous times. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: I would remind members when there's a point of order that they should sit quietly so that I can hear what's being said so I can rule appropriately.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, and they're more than welcome to get up and speak on the same point of order. But over and over in this House, we want to respect the Speaker's ruling. And when somebody is called to order, we respect that. And if they were looking at the camera rather than yourself, Honourable Speaker, they might have heard order and decided to sit down.

Whether you were standing or not, it wasn't showing on the camera. But the member mistakenly sat down when he—when they heard order or what he thought was order. It was so loud in here. It was hard to hear with the online streaming and that member has—is just being exceptionally cautious on this point of order.

And I would ask that the member be allowed to conclude his time, which is probably about 20 minutes or so—but I'm sure the time is recorded. He has exercised

his cautiousness with the Speaker, and when the Speaker gets up and puts those words on the record, we should all heed when the Speaker calls order. And when the Speaker calls order, he should be heard in silence. And it was just very, very confusing for the member because it was so noisy in here. And members opposite will have plenty of time to get up and speak on this point of order.

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I think I've heard just about enough. The member is not adding anything new to the conversation now. He's repeating what he's said several times.

And I will stand by my ruling because any number of times in this House, I call order—as I did several times during this point of order—and members did not sit down. So, therefore, when the member sat down, his time ended.

So the honourable member does not have a point of order.

* * *

The Speaker: So now we'll move on.

Are there other speakers?

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Going—I want to talk a bit about Bill 53, budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act.

Manitobans deserve better than to get this type of stuff rammed down their throats. The constituents of Manitobans deserve better than backroom decision making that we've been seeing over and over by this

government. They deserve far better than the government that refuses, so—*[interjection]* And I can hear the member there, the Minister of Environment heckling.

I know he wants to get up to Swan River to see the Duck Mountain so bad, and he's trying to say, can I come up and visit them? And I'll give him that opportunity, I'll—he can—I can even chauffeur him around there. I know that he's got relatives up there that are looking forward to seeing him. So, yes, I welcome him.

But Manitobans deserve far better than a government that refuses to listen, Manitobans being forced legislation. We've seen this junk food tax over and over again, and trying to save Manitobans a little bit of money is going to bring a lot of increased medical concerns, diabetes, all those things from this junk food.

But, over the past two years, we've watched this government repeatedly jam ominous budget bills through the Legislature with little debate. And again today, they're trying to do that. Little scrutiny, no meaningful public consultation and they've literally turned BITSA into a dumping ground. They've tackled on schedules and unrelated legislation to avoid proper scrutiny.

And Manitobans want to have a say; they want—

The Speaker: Order, please.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 20, 2026

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