



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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



Vol. LXXIX No. 32 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, March 24, 2025

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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
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
JACKSON, Grant	Spruce Woods	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	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
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
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>	Transcona	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 24, 2025

*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 and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

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

Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Riding Mountain, on House business.

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** Pursuant to section 44(3) of The Conflict of Interest Act, I rise today to table copies of a complaint I have made to the Ethics Commissioner. The letter outlines concern about the member for Fort Rouge's (Mr. Kinew) privately chartered air travel to two—the 2023 and '24 Grey Cup games without prior approval or public disclosure, as required by The Conflict of Interest Act.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Routine proceedings. Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

#### Pharmacy Appreciation Month

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** I am proud to stand up in the

House today and recognize March 2025 as Pharmacy Appreciation Month.

Pharmacists and pharmacy service providers play an integral role in our health-care system. Over 1,100 community pharmacists provide care to tens of thousands of Manitobans in more than 90 communities across our province each and every day.

This past weekend, I had the privilege of meeting many pharmacists at the Pharmacists Manitoba Conference and congratulating 14 award recipients making health care stronger across our province. And I have to say it was pretty inspirational to be there and hear the stories of these incredible pharmacists and community members who are so committed to making our health-care system the best that it can possibly be.

The knowledge and expertise that pharmacists bring in providing patient care is essential and invaluable to all Manitobans. Pharmacists are not only experts in medication management, they also play an important role in preventative care and chronic disease management. They offer valuable health consultations and provide advice on staying healthy and making appropriate and supported lifestyle changes.

Pharmacists have played a foundational role of our government's free birth control initiative, distributing over 32,000 birth control prescriptions to Manitobans since it launched. I want to say thank you to all of those pharmacists who have been a part of that and who are making a difference in the lives of Manitobans who need this care all across our great province. An integral role they've also played in the delivery of free HIV medications.

Pharmacists are an incredibly 'impoitant'—important point of care for many Manitobans who need these medications. They provide education one on one to folks. They're a primary-care provider that is really making a difference on the front lines of our communities.

As accessible health-care providers, pharmacists remain a trusted and reliable source for health advice and support. This month, and every month, our government recognizes the importance of pharmacists. So, on behalf of our government, I want to extend my sincere gratitude to Manitoba pharmacists for their dedication, expertise and ongoing contributions to our health-care system. We will continue to work in

partnership with all pharmacists to ensure that they can continue to serve Manitobans in the best ways possible.

Honourable Speaker, I am thrilled to be able to welcome guests from the College of Pharmacists and Pharmacists Manitoba here with us today. I'd like to welcome Gayle Romanetz, the president of Pharmacists Manitoba and who's also an excellent emcee at their events.

I want to welcome Darren Murphy, the past president of Pharmacists Manitoba; Andrea Lear, CEO of Pharmacists Manitoba; Ryan Buffie, chair of the College of Pharmacists of Manitoba Council; Kevin Hamilton, the registrar and CEO of the College of Pharmacists of Manitoba, and many guests—pharmacists' guests who have joined us here today.

I would ask all members of this House in thanking them for all they do to make health care better by working together.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Roblin—*[interjection]* Oh, sorry.

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, I just want to add the names of the additional guests in the gallery to Hansard for the permanent record of the House.

*Jen Butler, vice president of Pharmacists Manitoba; Jen Hlynsky, secretary of Pharmacists Manitoba; Kathy Hunter, vice chair, CPhM Council; Anne Janes, director of policy and legislation, College of Pharmacists of Manitoba; Marianna Pozdirca, external relations chair of Pharmacists Manitoba; Anja Sadovski, communications specialist, College of Pharmacists of Manitoba*

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** It's an honour to stand before the House today to join in celebrating Pharmacy Appreciation Month, a time to recognize and express our deepest gratitude to the dedicated pharmacy professionals across Manitoba.

Pharmacists are more than medication experts; they are trusted health-care partners who guide us through treatment plans, ensuring we receive the safest and most effective medications. For many Manitobans, they are a critical part of primary care.

But their impact reaches far beyond the counter. Pharmacists play an essential role in delivering patient-centred care, working alongside physicians, nurses and other health-care professionals to support healthier communities. As an MLA, I have spoken

with dozens of pharmacists, both in my constituency and across Manitoba, and one message is clear: they want to do more to serve their communities.

Enabling pharmacists to work to their full scope and abilities should be an easy win. It's something that the previous Progressive Conservative government made important progress toward by expanding their scope in 2021 to assess and prescribe treatment for recurrent bladder infections in women and to offer smoking cessation services. These changes empowered pharmacists to provide timely, accessible care to Manitobans..

In Alberta, Ontario, and Nova Scotia, pharmacists help fill the primary-care gap, providing patient-first services in a community-based setting. They can prescribe for minor ailments, like antibiotics for a tick bite, and prescribe birth control, and help manage chronic diseases like diabetes.

With so many Manitobans still without a family doctor, any expansion of primary-care services should be a priority. Yet, since taking office, the NDP has done nothing to expand pharmacists' roles, choosing the status quo over innovation in our health-care system. March may be almost over, but the NDP still has time to reflect on Pharmacy Appreciation Month and take real action. Expanding pharmacists' scope would be a common sense, patient-first policy.

As we celebrate Pharmacy Appreciation Month, I encourage all Manitobans to take a moment to thank their pharmacists.

To all pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy teams across Manitoba, thank you. We are grateful for your dedication to Manitoba patients.

\* (13:40)

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Coach Brian Dobie

**Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation):** Honourable Speaker, today I am honoured to rise and pay tribute to a—the passionate and inspirational leader you want on your sideline: Coach Brian Dobie. Coach Dobie served as the head coach of University of Manitoba Bisons football team from 1996 until his retirement this past season, after 29 outstanding years of leadership.

Throughout his tenure, he became a household name in Canadian football and the most successful coach in Bisons football history. His playbook was

always full of winning strategies, not just for the game, but for life.

Under his guidance, he led the Bisons to five Canada West conference regular season titles, including three undefeated seasons; he claimed three Hardy Cup championships, the team made it to two national championships and won the Vanier Cup in 2007.

While I'm honoured to be one of Coach Dobie's former players, his legacy also includes CFL and NFL stars such as Israel Idonije, David Onyemata, Nic Demski and DJ Lalama, just to name a few. His groundbreaking teams have also included Maya Turner, the first woman to score in a U Sports football game.

Coach Dobie is known for giving incredibly inspirational speeches and has been a mentor to countless student athletes, his relentlessness about hard work and fair play and has brought out the best in a generation of football players.

I know first-hand that Brian Dobie coaches you to be the best person, not just the best athlete. He coaches you to give it your all in football so that you learn to give it your all in life. He coaches you to believe in yourself so that you can carry that belief with you long after you're done with football.

Now Coach Dobie is here with us in the gallery today, joined by his wife, Jackie. So I invite my colleagues to rise and join me in congratulating Coach Brian Dobie for his exceptional coaching career, his long-lasting legacy.

Coach Dobie, you are a true Bison.

### **Recognizing Volunteers in Manitoba**

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** With spring upon us and summer around the corner, it's an appropriate time to celebrate the heart and soul of our great province: our volunteers.

Each summer, as the sun shines over our prairie province, we witness the tapestry of fairs, parades, festivals, markets, sports, powwows and many more special celebrations. Behind every joyful moment and every successful event lies a dedicated group of individuals whose contributions often go unnoticed but are absolutely indispensable: our volunteers.

In Manitoba, the spirit of volunteerism runs deep. These remarkable individuals give their time, energy and passion to ensure that our communities thrive. From the bustling markets of Winnipeg to the charming fairs in rural towns, it is the volunteers who

work tirelessly behind the scenes. They set up tents, organize activities, welcome visitors and create an atmosphere that makes each event memorable. It takes many hours to co-ordinate these summer events so that every detail is covered.

I want to highlight just a few special events coming up in Agassiz this spring and summer: Westbourne Fish Fry; Arden hosts a Whitemud festival; Neepawa has fair days and Filipino Heritage Day; MacGregor has Bull Bash and fair days; Carberry has the ag fair and Homecoming; Gladstone has fair days and provides great accommodations at their local campground; Plumas has a slow-pitch tournament and parade; Austin has the Manitoba Threshermen's Reunion and Stampede; Sandy Bay is hosting the 45th Annual Traditional Pow Wow; Franklin hosts a Fish Fry; Polonia this year will be hosting Huns Valley 140th Celebration; Kelwood hosts the Eleanor Rose quilt show and Harvest Sun Music Festival; Langruth has a Harvest Festival; Treherne has Run for The Hills marathon; Wellwood has a great, fantastic fireworks display for July 1; and Shilo does its annual Lobsterfest.

To the many volunteers across the province, thank you. Together, we can continue to build a vibrant and inclusive Manitoba, where everyone's—

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

### **CFB Winnipeg 100th Anniversary**

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** Honourable Speaker, I have the great privilege of rising today on behalf of the MLA for St. James, to recognize the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Forces Base Winnipeg.

I am honoured to be joined by the service members who are here with us in the gallery today, individuals whose courage, dedication and sacrifice represent the very best of our country.

For 100 years, CFB Winnipeg has been a powerhouse of innovation and a leader in excellence.

CFB Winnipeg reminds us that the true strength of a nation is found in the unity of its people, and it's a place where personal excellence meets collective purpose and where the leaders of the past inspire our heroes today.

Throughout its history, CFB Winnipeg has supported international peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. The base's personnel are regularly deployed to assist in disaster relief, conflict zones and peacekeeping operations.

During the Second World War, CFB Winnipeg trained approximately 131,000 Canadians and Allied aircrew across Canada, helping Canada earn the nickname, the Aerodrome of Democracy. And today, the CFB Winnipeg is home to numerous Royal Canadian Air Force schools and approximately 25 lodger units across Western Canada.

As the regional headquarter of the Canadian North American Aerospace Defense Command, CFB Winnipeg remains a critical tool for protecting Arctic sovereignty, serving as a strategic hub for defence operations and surveillance in one of the most challenging and vital regions. Its personnel play a key role in ensuring that Canada's northern borders remain secure.

On behalf of the member for St. James (MLA Sala), we are so honoured to have CFB Winnipeg in the great community of St. James.

As CFB Winnipeg enters its second century, I encourage all Manitobans to join in celebrating this significant milestone.

And to commemorate the 100th anniversary, a series of celebratory events will take place both on-base and in the city of Winnipeg. They include Freedom of the City parade at City Hall in May and an invitation to the public to visit the base during Doors Open Winnipeg.

To the members joining us today: Know that all Manitobans are grateful for the work that you do to keep—

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

**An Honourable Member:** Leave.

**The Speaker:** Does the member have leave to finish his statement? *[Agreed]*

**MLA Pankratz:** To the members joining us today: Thank you so much; know that all Manitobans are so grateful for the work that you do to keep our beautiful country strong and free, and in the words of the CFB Winnipeg motto, prospice, meaning look to the future. We know that in the years ahead, your role in defending Canada's sovereignty will be as vital as ever.

Please, if everyone could rise and recognize the service members joining us here today.

## Provincial Finances and Economy

**Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte):** When the going gets tough, the Kinew NDP government has no answers but love to play with smoke and mirrors. Well, that smoke is starting to clear and expose the real NDP, but don't take my word for it.

CBC reported that the under this Finance Minister's—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:** —best-case scenario, Manitoba would balance the budget by the year 2422. That's 397 years from now.

This alone is—this NDP is projecting a \$800-million deficit—that's over \$2 billion—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:** —Honourable Speaker, two years under this NDP.

Where the Premier (Mr. Kinew) once spoke of an economic horse pulling the social cart, last year's NDP's budget starved that horse; this year's budget killed that horse.

Let's do a quick recap on the NDP in the last 17 months: the largest education property tax increase, to the tune of \$330 million under this NDP; the largest gas tax increase in the history of this province, costing the average Manitoban \$526 at the pump; unemployment has risen to over 6 per cent; US exports have declined 6.6 per cent, and China exports have declined 11 per cent, and that was before the tariffs started. Manitoba has the highest inflation under this NDP at 3.5 per cent and some of the highest prices for food and housing in this country.

The Premier himself acknowledged that tariffs would lead to a recession, but what has he done? He has imposed over a billion-dollar tax increase on Manitobans, Honourable Speaker. The madness must stop under this NDP.

This is time where we should be unleashing the potential of Manitoba, not taxing it to oblivion. We must eliminate interprovincial trade barriers and allow goods to flow east and west and stand up for Manitoba.

Just like it is time for change in Ottawa, it's going to be time for change here in Manitoba.

\* (13:50)

### Myer's Delicatessen

**MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo):** Today, I'm glad to recognize one of Tuxedo–Tuxedo's constituencies' favourite local delis. Myer's Delicatessen has been more than a place to eat for over 66 years.

It's a place that makes you feel at home from the moment you walk through the door. Stepping into Myer's Deli is an experience. You will always receive a warm hello immediately upon entry. And personally, I'm always fascinated by the memorabilia filling all their walls, whispering stories of days long gone.

And I'm currently embarking on what I'm calling a sandwich adventure, trying each of their signature sandwiches: the Spicy Scarlett is my current favourite.

Family owned and operated since 1958, Myer's continues to thrive under the stewardship of Harrison Steek and his father, Garth, taking ownership in 2010. They uphold a legacy built on delicious sandwiches, warm hospitality and a deep connection to community.

Establishments like Myer's Deli remind us of a simple truth: Neighbourhoods flourish when they have local businesses they can rely on. Throughout their dedication to quality and community, Myer's Deli has remained steadfast in their values.

They support other local and Canadian suppliers, like Gunn's Bakery and Mona Lisa Ristorante from Winnipeg, as well as Montreal bagels from Montreal, just to name a few.

Myer's Deli and the Steek family embody the best of what Manitoba has to offer: a friendly, supportive community built on shared experiences. So I invite everyone here to start their own sandwich adventure at Myer's Deli, and I'm certain it will give you a story to share.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, there are several guests in the gallery I would like to introduce.

You have seated in the public gallery, from Gables Heritage School, 18 middle school students under the direction of Matthew Goossen.

The group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter).

We welcome you here today.

Seated in the public gallery, we have Bruce Slinkman from Bemini *[phonetic]*, Minnesota, who is the guest of the honourable member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle).

And in addition to those members mentioned earlier by the honourable Minister of Health, from the pharmacy Manitoba and College of Pharmacists in pharmacy—in recognition of Pharmacy Appreciation Month, we have additionally Jen Butler, Jen Hlynsky, Marianne *[phonetic]* Pozdirca, Anne Janes, Anja Sadoski and Helen *[phonetic]* Hunter, and they're all guests, I said, of the honourable member—the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care (MLA Asagwara).

And we welcome you all here today.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Premier's Travel on Charter Flight Conflict of Interest Inquiry

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** A big thank-you for everyone joining us in the gallery today, Honourable Speaker, Pharmacists Manitoba, and of course, happy anniversary to CFB for—on their hundredth of being the air force for all of Canada.

So thank you to everyone for your service. *[interjection]*

Honourable Speaker, I know that the house—Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) wants to get up and ask some questions, but she'll have an opportunity in the future.

Under the Province's Conflict of Interest Act, travel on a non-commercial chartered or private aircraft must be approved by the Ethics Commissioner. For this Premier, we know that ethics seem to be a continued afterthought.

Prior to his paid junkets in '23 and '24, the Premier could have consulted Manitoba's Ethics Commissioner. If—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ewasko:** —the Premier is so confident that he doesn't—broken the conflict laws, can he table the Ethics Commissioner's opinion that he solicited in '23 and '24, Honourable Speaker?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** I'm happy to table a lot of information. For instance, I could table some

facts that show that in 2019, Brian Pallister went to the Grey Cup, charged taxpayers \$1,727; 2021, Heather Stefanson also went to the Grey Cup, charged taxpayers more than \$2,000 for that trip. In 2022, Heather Stefanson went to the Grey Cup again, and for a second time, charged taxpayers more than \$1,700 for the trip.

I can table all this information into the permanent record if the members opposite want me to do so.

What I would say is this: yes, I went to the Grey Cup two times. What I did that's different than Brian Pallister and Heather Stefanson, I dipped into my own pocket, paid for the flights, paid for the tickets, paid for the hotel myself.

If you want me to bill the taxpayers of Manitoba, guess what? It ain't happening. I'll continue to foot my own bill.

You can continue to line up at the trough.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** So, Honourable Speaker, once again, this Premier stands up and tries to distract from the facts.

Honourable Speaker, 170 days, an official warning from the Manitoba Ombudsman that the Premier was not in compliance—that's what it takes for the Premier to come up with a weak excuse for his latest ethics dilemma.

And how does this Premier show Manitobans that he's done nothing wrong? Well, this is—we'll enlighten his caucus that he went and he deleted all—and erased all his digital information. Nothing shows guilty more than trying to erase his digital evidence. This Premier and his staff are more concerned about avoiding accountability.

Why did the Premier order the deletion of his online disclosures if he has nothing to hide, Honourable Speaker?

**Mr. Kinew:** I think the member opposite stood up in question period and is now scrambling for a way to delete this line of questioning.

And then he looks over his shoulder at the member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk) who's all of a sudden leaning forward and paying attention, thinking that he might get some advice on how to operate a government cell phone correctly. But you know what? No free IT support from this side of the House.

I will repeat again for the members opposite: Brian Pallister went to the Grey Cup, charging taxpayers \$1,700; Heather Stefanson went to the Grey Cup, charging taxpayers \$2,000. She went back a second time, charged taxpayers again, more than \$1,700.

Where am I different from Brian Pallister and Heather Stefanson? Well, I don't close emergency rooms; I build emergency rooms. I don't charge a gas tax; I cut the gas tax. And when it comes to watching football games, yes, I cheer for the Blue Bombers, but I pay my own way every single time.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** Honourable Speaker, to have a serious second here for a second, I'm hoping that this coming Grey Cup, the Premier doesn't go, because the last two years he's gone, the Bombers have lost, so if he'd please stay away.

In opposition, the MLA for Fort Rouge promised transparency—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ewasko:** In government, the MLA for Fort Rouge has delivered nothing but tricks.

Even Democracy Watch, Honourable Speaker, says, and I quote: Not everyone has access to that plane, and so accepting the seat on the plane for himself and others is what causes the conflict. End of quote.

Another quote from CBC: Providing inaccurate and contradictory information regarding the Premier's expenses. End quote. That's a nice way of saying that the Premier's staff were caught trying to bend the truth to media and to Manitobans.

The Families Minister has no issue firing her press secretaries, even if she gets sued for racial discrimination.

Why should Manitobans or the media trust anything coming out of this NDP government when they cannot even tell the truth—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ewasko:** —about a Blue Bombers charter—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired. *[interjection]*

The honourable Minister of Education will come to order, please.



**An Honourable Member:** Honourable Speaker, put up your hand if you know what was going on with that question. No, I didn't think so either. So when they're—

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

I failed to recognize the Honourable First Minister.

The Honourable First Minister.

**Mr. Kinew:** And I fail to recognize what the members opposite are going on about.

Again, they had a whole weekend to work something up. There's all sorts of political stories going on with the federal writ being dropped, and the Leader of the Opposition comes in here to try and attack the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, apparently.

\* (14:00)

That's literally what he just said. He mentioned Blue Bombers playing—leave them out of it. Leave the Families Minister out of it.

If you got a quarrel with me paying for my own way to the Grey Cup, go ahead. But then send out an email to PC Party members and explain why it was okay for Brian Pallister to charge taxpayers to go to the Grey Cup. Explain to PC Party members why it was okay for Heather Stefanson to charge taxpayers to go to the Grey Cup. And then send another email asking why it was okay for Heather Stefanson to bill taxpayers a second time to go to the Grey Cup.

When you do that and you stop tapping out for backbench questions—

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

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

### **Crime and Public Safety Timeline for Bail Reform**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** The difference is, Honourable Speaker, that Premier Stefanson and Premier Pallister actually followed the law, unlike this Premier who—

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

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ewasko:** —constantly dodges it and then makes excuses on a daily basis.

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

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ewasko:** When it comes to bail reform—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) will come to order.

**Mr. Ewasko:** When it comes to bail reform, the Premier said, and I quote: There's no need to wait for other levels of government to take action. End quote.

In fact, bail reform was so easy that all the Premier had to do—according to his words, of course—and I quote: Direct the Ministry of Justice to implement stronger conditions on bail to keep you safe in the community. End quote.

Yet just this past Friday, we saw the Premier pleading for help from Prime Minister Carney. Please, Mr. Carney, can you close my Justice Minister's revolving door, he asked him.

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** I think tone is important here. We all stood together in the Chamber to say that we were going to support the family of Kellie Verwey, a family that had experienced something very tragic.

Now, after I had the opportunity to speak to Ms. Verwey's relatives, I went and spoke to the other premiers.

Now, let me pause here for a second and tell you that the Minister of Justice of Manitoba (Mr. Wiebe) is doing important work in ensuring that bail reform happens here at the provincial level, with more resources for law enforcement and more direction for Crown attorneys, amongst many other steps.

But I sustained support from every single premier of every province and territory in this country to take up the issue of bail reform with Canada's new Prime Minister. I'm happy to report to the House that I then went and shared that information with Kellie Verwey's family.

Public safety is a very important issue. We'll continue to work hard on this in a very substantive way while they're clearly stuck in the past, trivializing such important issues.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** Honourable Speaker, the Premier vowed to be hard on the people supplying drugs in our communities. He described drugs as a scourge that had to be dealt with and he promised action. Unfortunately for Manitobans, the Premier refuses to do anything except offer sound bites.

On March 21, the police seized many illegal items from an individual that was released by his failed Minister of Justice. They were also charged with fail to comply with probation order and fail to attend court.

Why did the Premier's failed Justice Minister release this individual only to supply cocaine in our communities within days?

**The Speaker:** If I could get the clock stopped for a minute, please.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Some guests in the gallery that—it's been advised that it's urgent that I introduce them.

It's possible the—in the public gallery, we have two guests who are guests of the honourable Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable), Theresa Kosar and Henry Kosar.

And we welcome you here today.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Kinew:** Why does the member opposite talk down to Manitobans? People across Manitoba know it's not the Justice Minister that releases anybody; it's a judge, a separate branch of government.

Now, the policy tools that we have at the provincial level, they include things like intelligence sharing across jurisdictions. They include things like investing in law enforcement. They include things like providing direction to Crown attorneys while respecting the independence of the judiciary.

Ask yourself, which of those steps did the PCs take while they were in office for two successive terms? None of them. We actually lost 55 Winnipeg Police Service officers during their two terms in government. There was no intelligence being shared across jurisdictions. In fact, that's probably why the National Police Federation has looked at our Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) and said that they would like other provinces to follow his approach.

These are serious, substantive issues that are being dealt with in a serious and a substantive way. If the members opposite ever want to step up onto that level and engage with us in that fashion, we'll be more than ready.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** Honourable Speaker, this is a very important topic, and this is what he said, Honourable

Speaker. He's the one who promised it in his own words, and he failed yet again.

On March 22, a 23-year-old female was walking to work with a—when a group of unknown teens began following her. When they caught up to her, she was thrown to the ground, punched, kicked in her head and upper body, and they demanded her property. Fifteen-year-old female, 14-year-old male and a 12-year-old female were eventually arrested. So much for ending violent crime under this NDP watch.

Considering the Premier's own legal history, maybe he doesn't consider that assault a violent crime. Other than begging Mark Carney for help in keeping a failed Justice Minister at the Cabinet table—[*interjection*]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ewasko:** —what is the Premier doing to ensure Manitobans can walk to work without being assaulted and robbed—[*interjection*]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** I'll just share a quick message for the kids. When you see somebody go personal, you know they're losing the argument.

Now, when you want to focus on making communities safer, what you have to focus on is bringing people together. So in addition to meeting with Prime Minister Carney on Friday, I also met with the federal NDP leader, Jagmeet Singh, and I met with the person that presumably everybody on that side is going to vote for in the federal election, Mr. Pierre Poilievre.

I raised the important issues that we articulated in the letter from the premiers, about this terrible tragedy that befell Kellie Verwey, and I received a commitment from every single person that I spoke to, that we are going to work together to make our community safer.

So again, I'm not providing direction on the approach that you should take when you're older, but I—[*interjection*]

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The honourable member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza) will come to order.

**Mr. Kinew:** So again, I'm not providing direction on how you should behave when you're older, but just consider whether you want to be engaging in personal—[*interjection*]

Sorry, are you going to allow that?

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

**The Speaker:** The honourable First Minister, because I'm listening on this side, I did not hear what he said on that side, so, yes, I guess I'm going to allow it.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, reflect. Do you want to engage in personal attacks or do you want to engage with leaders from different communities to bring about solutions to make people safer?

We're bringing solutions, we're working together—

**The Speaker:** The honourable First Minister's time has expired.

Order, please.

Stop the clock again, please.

Just before we carry on, when it gets noisy, sometimes I can't hear everything that's being said on this side or that side. If I can hear, as I previously have, I've stopped members and called them to order. That's the job of the Speaker, and I'll do my job to the best of my ability.

#### **Revenue Projections in Budget 2025 Impact of Tariffs on Manitoba's Economy**

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Even expert economists are questioning this minister's budget numbers. R-B said—RBC said that the budget projections from this government are overly optimistic and, I quote, do not account for an escalation of ongoing trade disruptions. I table this report for the members.

The minister has tabled a budget with a range of \$800 million to \$1.9 billion deficit, yet is banking on more tax revenue than ever before.

When can Manitobans expect a realistic account of Manitoba revenue projections?

**Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation):** I'm so glad I have an opportunity to talk about our terrific 2025 Budget that offers Manitobans 25 new ways to save.

\* (14:10)

I'm so glad to talk about how we permanently delivered a relief to the gas tax, 10 per cent relief. Free park passes for a year. Hydro rate freeze. A cut to the payroll tax. We're feeding kids in schools with a permanent nutrition program right across the province.

These are initiatives that absolutely they bring true affordability to Manitobans, unlike what member

opposites are saying. This budget delivers for all Manitobans.

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

**Mrs. Stone:** Honourable Speaker, this NDP government is living in the clouds and is not reflecting the true economic realities that this province is facing. TD is even more upfront in their analysis, quote: should downside growth risks manifest and Manitoba's fiscal position could deteriorate more significantly. I table that for the member opposite.

These are experts raising red flags because this government has been one of the last transparent in Canada when it comes to relaying information about how the tariffs would actually impact the economy.

How does this Premier (Mr. Kinew) justify a budget based on hypotheticals and not fiscal realities?

**Mr. Moses:** I think Manitobans all saw in our budget that released a budget with tariffs and a budget without tariffs. We're well prepared for the strategy.

And you know what else our budget said? Our budget also offered Manitobans more ways to save money this year by making it easier to afford a home with a \$1,600 home affordability tax credit; with free birth control coverage, including Plan B; more coverage for people with menopause—keeping the double of the fertility tax rate; \$625 credit for renters—that's a 9 per cent increase. More top-up for seniors. More for Rent Assist, ending the clawback to EAA. More financial assistance for post-secondary students. And the list goes on and on, Honourable Speaker.

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

**Mrs. Stone:** Honourable Speaker, the fact is it was an underwhelming budget. It was an unplanned document that does not reflect today's economic realities. Experts say that it is overly optimistic to bank on taxation growth like this minister has.

Manitobans are already feeling the impact of on-again, off-again America and China tariffs. Manitobans are seeing their incomes drop. Their crops are losing value before they're even planted in the ground, and Manitobans are facing layoffs. This is in addition to unemployment going to 6 per cent, and that was before tariffs took place under this NDP government.

How does this Premier justify increasing taxes on Manitobans when they may not have a job tomorrow?

**Mr. Moses:** Our budget provides supports for Manitobans, for businesses. We're here to make sure that life stays affordable and that we grow our economy. And you want to know how? We make even more ways to save for Manitobans. We—extending—the \$10-a-day child care so that Manitobans can save up to \$2,800 a year. We are saving family money through our \$300 security system rebate and a new security system rebate program for businesses.

We continue the EV rebate for—plug in the \$4,000 and a \$2,500 rebate for EVs that are used. This is a program that is great for Manitobans. And you know what we did differently this year? No more Teslas.

These are initiatives that Manitobans believe in, Manitobans are bought into, and that's why—

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

#### **Rivers Dam—Upgrade Concerns Project Costs and Completion Date**

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** Honourable Speaker, this tax-and-spend NDP government is so reckless with the hard-earned tax dollars of Manitobans that just four months ago the Infrastructure Minister said upgrades to the river's dam near Brandon would cost \$47 million. But, in the NDP's last week budget, Manitobans learnt that the cost of this project had ballooned to \$65.7 million. That's an increase of nearly 40 per cent.

Why is the cost of this project skyrocketing and what will be the cost of this much-needed project to Manitoba taxpayers in another four months? Seventy-five million? Or maybe a hundred million dollars?

**Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure):** And I'm thankful to the member opposite for the question. It gives me an opportunity to take a moment to reflect on the incredible amount of infrastructure built that is a part of Budget 2025. We're really excited about the work that we're doing in my department, whether that's on Rivers Dam or Highway 75, investments in the Port of Churchill. It's a very exciting year for Manitoba. We're going to build, build, build this province and create many new jobs.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member of La Vérendrye, on a secondary question.

**Mr. Narth:** This tax-and-spend NDP government is so out of touch that I don't even think they know where the Rivers Dam is. They can't keep their fiscal house

in order, just like the ballooning deficit and debt. This government can't keep major infrastructure projects on budget.

We found out in last week's budget that the cost of the Rivers Dam had increased by nearly \$20 million in four months. This important project started under our previous government but has seen two years of delays.

How can Manitobans have the faith that this NDP government can keep up with infrastructure demands and flood mitigation when project estimating is outpacing their budget?

**MLA Naylor:** And again, what a great opportunity to talk about some of the projects that we are doing in Manitoba. Whether it's building the Rivers Dam, whether it's repairing other bridge structures that we have going on all over the province and other water infrastructure, whether it's flood infrastructure, Highway 75, the Port of Churchill, my department is greatly focused on rebuilding and building up the transportation sector of Manitoba and being part of Budget 2025 that is all about the most amount of investments the government has ever made in infrastructure in this province.

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

**Mr. Narth:** Honourable Speaker, the only thing we're seeing is the runaway costs, and you know what? We haven't seen runaway costs like this since Bipole III: \$2 billion in 2007. Then it was \$3 billion, then \$4.6 billion by 2014.

The Rivers Dam is on a similar trajectory. Is the cost of this project going to come in double the original estimate? This NDP government has delayed this project over the last two years, and now we're seeing those costs of delays.

When will this NDP government bring in a major infrastructure project on time and on budget?

**MLA Naylor:** Again, I'm so excited about the infrastructure investments that we're making, both in my department and across budget. I will also let you know—let that member know through you, Speaker, that there's a very good chance that this project is going to come in under budget, so stay tuned.

#### **Community Safety in Budget 2025 Call for Stronger Bail Conditions**

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** Crime is out of control under this NDP government, and people are

scared. Grandmothers are getting assaulted going for milk. Newcomers are getting stabbed while they're walking in the park, all while children are getting sexually assaulted and sexually exploited.

Despite the fact that safety is a top priority for Manitobans, it clearly is not for this NDP government. The budget speech failed even to reference community safety, justice or bail, not even once, Honourable Speaker.

Is the Justice Minister so embarrassed by his catch-and-release policies that he's asked his colleague—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Balcaen:** —the minister of budget to make the decision all on his own for the betterment of—

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

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Of course, budget '25 included over \$900 million for the Department of Justice. That represents a 9.2 per cent increase over the previous year. And, of course, that's on top of the important work that we did in budget '24. All told, what this means at a base level for municipal and policing across our province is that we've increased over—by over 30 per cent more than the PCs ever spent on public safety in our province.

Now, we have specific funding when it comes to bail reform and additional supports, but the bottom line is, is that we are supporting community, we're working with them, and we are putting real dollars—

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

\* (14:20)

**Mr. Balcaen:** Honourable Speaker, the NDP's budget is full of propaganda—lots of sound bites, but no sound policies.

Hiring additional officers to catch more criminals, only to release them before the cell door closes is not a strategy. This failed Justice Minister continues to ignore the root cause of the violence on our streets; the root cause is catch and release.

Why is this minister ignoring his boss' demand that he, quote, implement stronger conditions on bail to keep Manitobans safe in our community?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, again, the member opposite's just wrong about Budget 2025, because it talks a lot about public safety and, in fact, the many ways that we are continuing to support municipal policing across

this province. That includes \$3.3 million for an RCMP emergency response team, \$2 million for an operational communications centre, \$11.9 million for First Nations and Inuit policing programs, \$3 million for 12 new WPS positions that are focused specifically on bail. And the list goes on and on, Honourable Speaker.

This represents a real commitment to making our province safer. It's about getting at the root causes but also supporting law enforcement to make those—our communities safer. We're going to continue to do—

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

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

**Mr. Balcaen:** Honourable Speaker, almost at the same time as this Finance Minister was attempting to talk safety, a male in his 60s was approached by an unknown male suspect who asked him for a cigarette. When the victim indicated he did not have one, the suspect walked away but then turned around, confronted the victim again and began punching him.

Another male, a second victim in his 50s, witnessed this assault and attempted to intervene, at which point the suspect threatened him with a knife; all of this within metres of this building and within hours of this budget speech.

When will this failed minister admit his hug-a-thug approach is not working?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Again, the member opposite resorts to catchphrases and one-liners.

This is serious, Honourable Speaker. That's why, unlike members opposite who cut 55 Winnipeg police officers under their time in office, unlike members opposite who actually cut the electronic monitoring program for those out on bail, our government is investing in these important areas. It's about working with community, it's about working with partners across this province. We're going to continue to work with WPS, with RCMP. We're going to get tough on bail while pushing the federal government at every step of the way.

Our government is taking action. Members opposite have no credibility when it comes to public safety in our province.

### Cardiac Patients Wait Time for Care

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** Today I want to share the story of John Funk and I will table a letter from his family. John Funk is a Niverville resident, a father of

four and a grandfather of 10. He's been a dedicated town councillor, a teacher and a pillar in his community.

In January, John had an angiogram and was told he needed a double bypass within one week. But three months later, he still doesn't have a surgery date. Meanwhile, he continues to suffer and has been forced to go to the ER, waiting over 14 hours. His family is desperately asking for clarity, communication and a realistic timeline, but instead they've been met with silence.

Why are cardiac patients in Manitoba being forced to wait far beyond medically recommended timelines for urgent care under the NDP?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** Honourable Speaker, our government recognizes that no matter where Manitobans live, they should be able to access care in a timely manner, which is why we've made some pretty significant investments in not only adding capacity throughout the system, but making sure we're adding health-care workers to the front lines to provide that care: 1,255 net-new health-care workers have joined our health-care system across the province.

On that side of the House, Honourable Speaker, the previous PC government, that member cut the Cardiac Centre of Excellence here in Manitoba. We had a centre here in Manitoba that was the envy of the rest of the country.

Can that member stand in her place today and finally explain to Manitobans why she and the failed PC government cut it?

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

**Mrs. Cook:** John's situation is eerily similar to that of Debbie Fewster's, a case I raised earlier this month. Thanks to the NDP's inability to manage staff holidays, Debbie's surgery was repeatedly delayed and in the end, she was let down by a system that was supposed to save her.

This was not caused by an issue from the past; it is mismanagement happening right now under this Health Minister. Now John Funk's family is desperately seeking answers and they are getting nothing. They don't need excuses or spin or finger-pointing from this NDP government. They need help now before it's too late for their father.

How many more families must endure this uncertainty before the minister takes real action to prevent cardiac patients from dying on a wait-list?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, our government takes these kinds of concerns very seriously, which is why we've met with the cardiac specialist expert-experts, rather, at St. Boniface Hospital.

We are actively working with them to restore the Cardiac Centre of Excellence that was dismantled by that member and members on that side of the House.

In regard to this particular Manitoban, our office has been reaching out, and we look forward to working with them to better understand what's happening in this particular circumstance.

But I want to be very clear. Talking about what the previous government did to destroy a Cardiac Centre of Excellence is so important. It's important for us to recognize that we can't repeat the mistakes of that member and members opposite.

On this side of the House, we're going to continue to invest to make health care stronger, and certainly restore a Cardiac Centre of Excellence.

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

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

**Mrs. Cook:** A recent poll that I'll table found that 82 per cent of Canadians want provinces tracking and publicly disclosing how many patients die while waiting for surgery, and 86 per cent think patients should be immediately informed if life-saving care cannot be provided in time.

The public overwhelmingly believes they deserve transparency if our health-care system is going to fail them. The Canadian Medical Association on their website calls for provinces to give patients out-of-province options when care cannot be provided in a timely manner. I'll table this as well.

Stop deflecting. The minister needs to do the right thing. If waits here are too long, let patients know and provide them with alternatives. This is common-sense, patients-first policy.

Will the minister commit today to immediately implementing Debbie's Law?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, I had the opportunity to speak with Debbie's family, and we had a really good and lengthy conversation about what they would like to see happen in our health-care

system. And I do look forward to continuing to meet with them so we can work together to restore and repair the damage done by the previous government.

On that side of the House, that member had opportunities while the PCs were destroying health care to stand up and say something. She could have used her voice then—two terms of a PC government that dismantled the Cardiac Centre of Excellence that was the envy not only in this country, but across the globe.

On that side of the House, the member should stand up and do the right thing, finally, and apologize to Manitobans for her role in the damage they've done to health care.

On this side of the House, we're working with families and experts and the front lines to make health care better.

#### **Health Care for International Students Request to Reinstate Coverage**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** According to Budget 2025, health-care coverage for international students will not be reinstated. This is yet another unfulfilled NDP campaign promise.

I'd like to table Hansard from April 28th, 2018, where the now-Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino) when in opposition stated: We are hoping that the minister would reconsider the elimination of health insurance for international students.

Honourable Speaker, does the minister, now that she is in government, still agree with the statement, and will she bring back health-care coverage for international students?

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** I thank the member opposite for the question.

I think we're unified here in wanting to make sure that international students receive the care and attention that we all know that they deserve. I think we can also all agree that turning down the temperature on rhetoric around division—who's included, who isn't—would be helpful for everyone.

We have a federal election on the rise, and on the rise with that federal election is really harmful rhetoric around immigration, who belongs here, who doesn't, and I just want to extend my sincere thanks to the students who have chosen Manitoba to stay and study here, and look forward to continuing to work with you on this important issue.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Tyndall Park on a supplementary question.

**MLA Lamoureux:** There are critical gaps in health care that continue to prevent international students from accessing necessary care, including prescription coverage.

A couple of weeks ago, I met with the University of Winnipeg Students' Association, and they shared concerns regarding how health coverage still has not been reinstated.

\* (14:30)

Two months ago, according to a CBC article, which I table, the Minister of Advanced Education said they are working with students and administration to address the previous PC government's decision to end health-care coverage for international students.

When will Manitoba be brought up to par with other provinces and reinstate health-care coverage for international students?

**MLA Cable:** I thank the honourable member again for putting some important facts on the record. She's right to note that the previous administration completely destroyed not only international—or, coverage for international students, but the health-care system in general.

As the other minister—Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care (MLA Asagwara) spoke of earlier, we are actively working to restaff our health-care system. That includes adding seats to physicians, physician assistants, nurses, nurse practitioners, X-ray tech, lab tech, health-care aide, not only in Winnipeg but across the province, where there are investments at UCN, at Prairie Mountain Health.

We are investing in the system all across—

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

The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a final supplementary question.

**MLA Lamoureux:** Lastly, I want to table a Winnipeg Free Press article from just this past Friday where it says, and I quote: "The NDP campaigned on reinstating coverage for non-citizen scholars enrolled in post-secondary schools in the leadup to the 2023 election." This government is almost halfway through their term, and we've heard absolutely nothing on the matter.

Will this government commit here today to fulfill their election promise and bring back health-care coverage for international students before the end of their mandate?

**MLA Cable:** Honourable Speaker, the short answer is yes. A mandate is four years. We are working diligently on this.

And I have to let the member know, it would have been a lot easier if there weren't interruptions from the federal Liberals on this issue. So we had cuts to international students. We had—we continue to—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Cable:** We've had to add a fully new system around attestation letters that never existed before. So while we are focused on fixing this, we'd appreciate if there weren't any further interruptions on the international student file.

#### US Tariffs on Canadian Goods Government Response

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** While our government is working for Manitobans, it seems like the members opposite are more interested in working for Trump and his buddies. You know, the MLA for Fort Whyte, he thanked Trump for his tariffs; the MLA for Borderland wants to become the MLA for no-border land; and the MLA for La Vérendrye would just prefer we do nothing on tariffs.

You know, when asked about our government's pushback about Elon Musk and the MLA for Midland responded with: I'm not a fan. And so does the minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation plan to take her advice on keeping Trump and Elon happy?

**Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation):** Absolutely not. Members opposite have lost all credibility. They can no longer be taken seriously or trusted when it comes to Donald Trump. I think they have their interests at heart more than Manitobans'.

So, we're different on this side of the House. We're on team Canada. We will never thank Trump for his tariffs. We will stand up for Manitobans and protect our border.

Now, next month they're going to be choosing a leader, and either way they'll have a Trump supporter as a leader of their party. Manitobans will know that they cannot be trusted because they'll be working for

Trump instead of Manitobans. On this side of the House, we will keep doing the job to work for Manitobans every single day.

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

I'd just remind the member for Waverley that we need to refer to people by their proper constituency names or ministerial titles.

#### Manitoba's Potato Industry Concern for Plant Closures and Job Losses

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** Manitoba's potato industry is facing a catastrophic crisis. Some producers that have called me over the weekend have had their contracts eliminated. It's not a huge logical leap to expect processing plant closures and job losses to follow.

What immediate actions will the minister take to support the potato industry—the growers, the processors—and protect Manitoba's processing sector from further decline?

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture):** I think my fellow MLA and minister kind of answered the question. Possibly, maybe the members opposite don't take such a liking to Trump because at the end of the day, this is all part of the tariff situation—turn up—that has been caused to the potato industry in the province of Manitoba and across Canada. And I do want to say that we have a good, strong working relationship with all ag ministers—the federal agriculture minister.

As a matter of fact, just recently announced: financial support will be coming to help out agriculture, such as increasing compensation rate from 80 per cent to 90 per cent in ag stability, doubling the ag—

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

And the time for oral questions has also expired.

#### PETITIONS

##### Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I wish to present the following petition.

And the background to this petition is as follows—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

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



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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition, Honourable Speaker, is signed by Stella Dyck, Henry Dirks, Al Dubé and many other fine Manitobans.

#### **MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility**

**Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte):** Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

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

(1) Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction

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

(2) An MRI machine is a non-invasive medical imaging technique that uses 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, diagnoses 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—Santé Sud Health Authority. Currently there is only one MRI machine in the RHA.

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

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

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

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

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.

Honourable Speaker, this petition has been signed by Valdine McLaughlin, Megan Williams-Wider [*phonetic*] and Liz Driedger.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

*Mr. Diljeet Brar, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

### **Supports for Manitobans with Learning Disabilities**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I wish to present the following petition.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Neurodivergent persons who struggle, struggled to learn literacy skills in public schools deserve to be taught these skills.

(2) Marin, an autistic adult with learning disabilities, faced significant challenges in learning literacy skills in Manitoba's public schools. Marin's teachers were trained in and expected to teach balanced literacy.

(3) Successive provincial governments, via the ministry of Education, failed to provide proper literacy instruction that has been known for a century to learning-disabled students. Marin was also repeatedly incorrectly diagnosed until a private diagnosis in 2024. Many students have been lost to suicide due to similar trauma that Marin experienced from public education and public health in this province. Marin did not get an IEP, as she is intelligent and non-violent.

(4) Marin's rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms were violated. The Manitoba public school system denied her the right to proper diagnoses and literacy instruction due to the policies and curriculums of various ministers of Education. The provincial government and appointed bodies have defied Supreme Court of Canada rulings.

(5) Marin's principle, embodied in the requests below, was created by her and her family because of perpetual and systemic harm caused by the Province's public education and public health systems.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government, included associated service providers, to adopt Marin's principle and to comply with Supreme Court of Canada judgments, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and The Human Rights Code.

(2) To urge the provincial government to ensure provincial public classroom teachers are fully trained in knowledge and approaches explicitly created for

students with learning disabilities, with no restriction to a single program or product.

(3) To urge the provincial government to commit to funding for private literacy services for all who are currently learning-disabled, with no penalty of discontinued instruction in public school, so they can become functionally literate and gain knowledge and skills like their peers.

(4) To urge the provincial government to commit funding for private counselling so each learning-disabled adult—diagnosed/suspected—has their choice of therapist to help overcome education trauma due to adverse provincial curriculum and policies, for private literacy instruction, at their discretion, to become functionally literate, and for access to evidence-aligned senior year classes that were missed so they can graduate with the education they have always had the right to receive; and

(5) To urge the provincial government to provide comprehension for harm and loss of income for Manitobans with learning disabilities who remain functionally illiterate after the age of 18.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

### **Provincial Road 210**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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 by rural communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly 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 Bob Poitrons [*phonetic*], Matt Bergman, Smokin-Joe and many other Manitobans.

#### **Death of Jordyn Reimer—Judicial Review Request**

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) On May 1, 2022, Jordyn Reimer, 24 years of age, was killed by an impaired driver while she was acting as a designated driver.

\* (14:50)

(2) There are two people legally culpable for her death: the impaired driver and the accomplice. The driver was charged; the accomplice has not been held accountable.

(3) A concerned citizen took the keys from the impaired driver earlier in the evening to ensure he could not drive impaired. The accomplice retrieved the keys from the citizen under false pretenses and knowingly provided the impaired driver with access to the vehicle.

(4) The Winnipeg Police Service, WPS, investigation provided adequate information to meet the charging standards and recommended charges be laid against the accomplice. The Crown prosecutors declined to prosecute the accomplice.

(5) The family of Jordyn Reimer has called for the prosecution of the accomplice and that the decision not to prosecute be reviewed independently.

(6) As recent as 2022, there is precedent to refer criminal files of decisions to not proceed with prosecution to extra-provincial departments of justice for review. This was done in the Peter Nygård file,

which ultimately led to a reversal of the decision not to prosecute, and charges were laid.

(7) An out-of-province review is supported by MADD Canada, MADD Manitoba and Manitobans.

(8) The family has exhausted every avenue within the existing system, and in the absence of a prescribed process when a disagreement exists on charging standards, the only option is to request an independent out-of-province review.

(9) In December of 2024, the WPS reported an alarming number of impaired drivers in the holiday Check Stop program. Extending criminal culpability beyond the driver to those who engage in overt actions to facilitate impaired driving will save lives.

(10) Manitobans deserve to have confidence in the provincial government and justice systems to make decisions that achieve true justice for victims and their families.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to order an out-of-province review of the prosecutor's decision to not prosecute the accomplice in the death of Jordyn Reimer.

This petition has been signed by Duane Seens, Pat Dunn, Karen Crozier and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This is signed by Kathy Bryce, Lynne Payette, Jean Orton and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

### **New Neepawa Health Centre**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

\* (15:00)

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by Stephanie Kryschuk, Kerrilee Lapointe and Madison Taylor and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

### **Phoenix School**

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

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 Joy Gauthier, Graeme McCombe, Mitchell Schimnowski and many, many other Manitobans.

### **Support for Border Communities**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Illegal border crossings into Manitoba have increased 14 per cent in 2024, raising significant public safety and security concerns, particularly in border communities.

(2) Changes to the Canada-US Safe Third Country Agreement have driven migrants deeper into hiding to avoid apprehension, making law enforcement efforts more difficult.

(3) Border patrol officials believe that criminal organizations, including Mexican cartels, are involved in smuggling operations at the border, posing serious security threats to Manitoba.

(4) Human smuggling networks are abandoning vulnerable migrants, including families, in isolated and dangerous locations by exposing them to severe risks, especially during Manitoba's harsh winters; and

(5) Border communities are preparing for a possible surge in illegal border crossings, which could overwhelm local resources and emergency search-and-rescue services.

(6) Despite these challenges, there has been little communication or support from the provincial and federal governments regarding their plans to assist border communities, leaving them under-resourced and unprepared to manage this escalating crisis.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to assist border communities in managing the rise in illegal border crossings into Manitoba; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to work closely with federal and local authorities to ensure adequate resources, including funding and support for emergency services, are available to protect local communities and that immediate measures be taken to dismantle and destroy all human smuggling networks operating in Manitoba.

This petition has been signed by Mary Reimer, Judy Peters and Barb Adair, along with many, many Manitobans.

### **Morden Waste Water Project**

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** I wish to present the following petition.

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

Between 2011 and 2021, Morden's population grew by an impressive 27 per cent, outpacing the national average by 16 per cent, according to the Statistics Canada.

(2) While growth is welcome and encouraged, Morden has long faced a critical need for infrastructure upgrades to meet current demands and support future development.

(3) Morden's waste water system has operated beyond capacity for years, prompting the Province in 2019 to halt property subdivisions due to insufficient waste water storage.

(4) As of 2024, after exploring all options, the city announced in July that the estimated cost for critical infrastructure upgrades has risen from \$70 million to \$88 million to \$108 million.

(5) These revised estimates leave Morden with a significant funding shortfall of 13 to 33 million dollars.

(6) Despite efforts to address this gap, including plans to raise utility fees for residents and businesses, such increases that have been delayed since 2017 due to the lack of an approved capital project, taxation is not enough.

(7) The lack of waste water capacity has severely impacted economic activity and growth in Morden and surrounding communities. Without much-needed waste water infrastructure improvements, growth and economic development will be hindered in all of southern Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to take immediate action and recognize the critical need of this waste water project for economic growth and environmental stability by committing to advocating and working with the federal government to close the gap with additional funding for Morden's waste water treatment system.

(2) To urge the provincial government to ensure all levels of government and regulatory bodies will expedite necessary funding and approvals necessary to advance the Morden waste water project with no further delays and ensure no hindrance to growth and economic development for Morden and southern Manitoba.

This petition has been signed by Greg Wiebe, Ernest *[phonetic]* Derksen and Denis Myers and many other Manitobans.

#### **Provincial Trunk Highway 34**

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Trunk Highway 34, PTH 34, is a two-lane provincial primary highway that runs from the US border where it meets with ND 20 to PTH 16 at the town of Gladstone.

\* (15:10)

(2) PTH 34 runs north-south in the south-central region of the province. It is the main highway for the towns of Crystal City, Pilot Mound and Holland, serving as a main corridor for semi-trailers, farm equipment, daily drivers and local school bus routes.

(3) A new bridge is currently being constructed over the Assiniboine River at PTH 34, north of Holland, in the RM of Victoria. The bridge serves as an important north-south link over the Assiniboine River between the Trans-Canada Highway and PTH 2.

(4) The deterioration of PTH 34 has raised major concerns due to its narrow shoulders and numerous deep potholes that pose serious safety risks considering farmers often need to use the highway to transport heavy equipment.

(5) Construction of a new bridge in accordance with current design codes and the RTAC standard, located on PTH 34 crossing the Assiniboine River, will support trade and commerce and improve public safety in the area, and also accommodate flood events on the Assiniboine River.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to address the conditions of Provincial Trunk Highway 34, making the necessary upgrades to RTAC standard and to resurface the road once the new bridge has been completed.

This petition has been signed by Brad Lohr, Curtis Lewco, Rena Lewco and many other fine Manitobans.

#### **Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) In 2022, according to Statistics Canada, there was 11.4 per cent increase in food prices.

(2) Staple food products such as baked goods, margarine and other oils, dairy products and eggs have seen some of the largest price increases.

(3) Agriculture and agri-food sectors contribute to close to 10 per cent of Manitoba's GDP.

(4) There are increased costs added at every step of the process for Manitoba's agriculture producers. In order to make 18 cents from one loaf worth of wheat, farmers are paying carbon tax at every stage of production to grow the crop and get it to market.

*The Speaker in the Chair*

(5) Grain drying, fertilizer and chemical production, mushroom farming, hog operations, the cost of heating a livestock barn, machine shops and utility buildings are all examples of how the carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels cost farmers and consumers more each year.

(6) In food production there are currently no viable alternatives to natural gas and propane. The carbon tax takes money away from farmers, making them less profitable and hindering rural agriculture producers' ability to invest in upgrades and improve efficiency while reducing emissions.

(7) The provincial government neglected farmers in the six-month fuel tax holiday until the opposition critic and local stakeholder groups called for their inclusion.

(8) The provincial jurisdictions and leaders have taken action on calling on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax and/or stop collecting the carbon tax altogether.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to call the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax of natural gas and other fuels and farm inputs for Manitoba agriculture producers and the agri-food sector to decrease the costs of putting food on the table for Manitoba consumers.

This petition is signed by Kaylie Specula, Julianna Roberts, Brett Johnson and many, many, many other Manitobans.

**Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders**

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** I wish to present the following petition.

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

(1) Kellie Verwey, a beloved young woman from Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, was tragically killed in a

car crash caused by a repeat violent offender with a long criminal history.

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition is signed by Liz Peixoto, Sandy Carroll, Donna Porteous and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

**Vocational School in Ste. Anne**

**MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

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

In March of 2023, a much-needed new vocational school was planned, budgeted for, and announced to be completed and operational for the 2027 school year.

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

Hundreds of families have participated in outreach done by the Seine River School Division, expressing a strong need for vocational training in the community.

The current provincial government paused the project upon taking office, and work has not resumed in spite of the Deputy Minister of Education admitting to trustees: You definitely need a new school.

Every delay prevents students in Ste. Anne and surrounding communities from having skills programming to which they are entitled and that they deserve.

The Seine River School Division trustees have identified areas of focus for this school of real local demand, such as health care and daycare, which are greatly needed.

Seine River's—the current high school is just not suitable for the limits on programming that can be offered as 400 students currently share a single three-stall boys' washroom and a single three-stall girls' washroom.

This planned school was to include daycare spaces that the community greatly needs. At present, the lack of available spaces has limited the ability for some parents to return to the workforce, which hurts both families and the local economy.

\* (15:20)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately begin work on the new Ste. Anne vocational school and allocate necessary resources to meet the original 2027 timeline that residents were expecting.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

#### **New Neepawa Health Centre**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

Honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition is signed by Trudy McCarth [*phonetic*], Doug Welbourne, Jacquie Aucoin and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.



### Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition has been signed by Brittnee Wolfe, Alexa Wolfe, Vicki DeLuca and many other Manitobans.

### Child Welfare System—Call for Inquiry

**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) On Sunday, February 11, 2024, Manitobans witnessed an unimaginable tragedy when five individuals that were murdered.

(2) The victims ranged at age two months to 30 years.

(3) Manitoba has the second highest rate of intimate partner violence among Canadian provinces, at a rate of 633 per 100,000 people, according to the police-reported data from Statistics Canada.

(4) Public reporting indicates that on December 9, 2023, Myah-Lee left a voicemail to her Child and Family Services worker in which she pleaded to be moved out of her home in Carman.

(5) Manitobans' Advocate for Children and Youth noted: This case highlights the failures of the government to respond to our recommendations.

(6) On March 6, in 2024, the Minister of Families and the MLA for St. Johns, indicated on the public record that she was too busy to discuss issues surrounding children in care, including calling a public inquiry into this unprecedented tragedy.

(7) The last inquiry held in Manitoba was on the death of five-year-old Phoenix Sinclair in 2008.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Families to develop better policies to protect youth in care from potential physical and psychological abuse.

(2) To urge the provincial government to immediately establish a public inquiry to identify the failing of a child-welfare system to ensure that all calls from child is never unanswered or ignored again.

This has been signed by persons such as Scott Samberg [*phonetic*], Garry Serruys and Glenn Vercaigne and many other Manitobans.

### Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders

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

\* (15:30)

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

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

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

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

*The Speaker in the Chair*

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This was signed by Jennifer Moreau, Daniel Grafton, Garth Grover and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

### Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) 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 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 in the Atlantic provinces 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 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.

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.

This is signed by Don Wiebe, Ken Rutter, Cor Lodder and many, many, many more Manitobans.

### Teaching Certification

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition.

The reasons for this petition are as—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The honourable member for Steinbach's been here for a little while. He should remember that the correct title is Honourable Speaker, not Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Apologize, Honourable Speaker. I've been here so long, I think you're my fifth Honourable Speaker.

I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, and the background to the petition is as follows:

(1) Ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subjects they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering well-rounded learning experiences for all Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments by the provincial—the Province of Manitoba to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation under The Education Administration Act have significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for teacher certification.

(3) These amendments eliminated all subject-area requirements for teacher certification, including major and minor teachable subjects and subject-specific requirements for early/middle years streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed: senior years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; early- to middle-years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; and early/middle years credit requirements for specific subjects, including: math; physical or biological science; English or French; and history and/or geography.

(5) Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary educators outside the faculties of education and business partners, were not consulted about the changes.

(6) The removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without sufficient training in core academic areas, thereby compromising the education that Manitoba students receive.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teacher certification and to reinstate teachable majors and minors and early- to middle-years requirements, which are essential for ensuring teachers have strong knowledge in core subject areas.

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous subject-area standards which are critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

And, Honourable Speaker, this petition is signed by Candi Bezo [*phonetic*], Jessica de Kort, Hayley Santos and many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** There are no more members wishing to do petitions?

Grievances and—no, no grievances. One minute please.

\* (15:40)

### ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**An Honourable Member:** How about grievances?

**The Speaker:** No grievances during budget days.

#### Speaker's Statement

**The Speaker:** Before I recognize the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), I have something I have to do. The first order of business, I must inform the House that the honourable member for Spruce Woods, Grant Jackson, has resigned his seat in the House effective immediately. I am therefore tabling his resignation letter and my letter to the Lieutenant Governor in Council advising of the vacancy in the House membership.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** Now, the honourable Minister of Justice.

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Acting Government House Leader):** On House business.

**The Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Justice, on House business.

**Mr. Wiebe:** In accordance with rule 35(6), I am interrupting the budget debate today in order to consider all stages of the Interim Supply process.

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 35(6), that the budget debate will be interrupted today in order to consider all stages of the Interim Supply process. Accordingly, we will now begin with step 1 of the Interim Supply procedure.

The House will resolve into Committee of Supply to consider the resolutions respecting the Interim Supply bill.

Would the Deputy Speaker please take the Chair.

### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

#### Interim Supply

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

We have before us for our consideration four resolutions respecting the Interim Supply bill.

The final—the first resolution pertaining to part A, Operating Expenditures for Interim Supply, reads as follows:

RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026, a sum not exceeding \$14,708,741,000, being 75 per cent of the total amount to be voted for the purposes set out in part A, bracket, Operating Expenditures, of those Estimates.

Does the Minister of Finance have any opening comments?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** Today we are considering the Interim Supply motions to provide for the funding of the government until the budget and appropriation act, 2025, are passed. I look forward to answering any questions and to then proceed to the consideration of the resolutions.

Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Minister.

Does the official opposition critic have an opening statement?

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** I understand the importance of Interim Supply. It's to ensure that our civil service gets paid and our government can keep the lights on.

It is unfortunate that this government continues to fail in its planning, as for the second year in a row,

they haven't introduced BITSA. And what concerns me today, as we have seen last year's budget versus this year's budget, there really isn't much of a difference and this year's budget is an extension of last year's.

But, as we know, last year's budget did have some surprises when it did come to BITSA, so I'll be looking at that carefully.

And with those brief opening comments, I look forward to moving forward with the bill at hand.

**The Chairperson:** The floor is open for questions.

Seeing no questions, shall the resolution pass? *[Agreed]*

The second resolution pertaining to part B, Capital Investments for Interim Supply, reads as follows:

RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026, a sum not exceeding \$803,804,000, being 90 per cent of the total amount to be voted for the purposes set out in part B, bracket, Capital Investments, of those Estimates.

Does the Minister of Finance have any opening comments?

**MLA Sala:** No.

**The Chairperson:** Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

**Mrs. Stone:** No.

**The Chairperson:** The floor is open for questions.

Seeing no questions, is the committee for the question?

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**The Chairperson:** Shall the resolution pass? *[Agreed]*

The third resolution part—pertaining to part C, Loans and Guarantees for Interim Supply, reads as follows:

RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026, a sum not exceeding \$845,665,000, being 90 per cent of the total amount to be voted for the purposes set out in part C, bracket, Loans and Guarantees, for those Estimates.

Does the Minister of Finance have any opening comments?

**MLA Sala:** No.

**The Chairperson:** Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

The floor is open for questions.

Seeing none, is the committee ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Chairperson:** Shall the resolution pass? [*Agreed*]

The fourth resolution pertaining to part D, Capital Investments by Other Reporting Entities for Interim Supply, reads as follows:

RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025, a sum not exceeding—sorry—the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026, a sum not exceeding \$1,267,952,000, being 90 per cent of the total amount to be voted for the purposes set out in part D, bracket, Capital Investments by Other Reporting Entities, of those Estimates.

\* (15:50)

Does the Finance Minister have any opening comments?

**MLA Sala:** No, thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

The floor is open for questions.

Seeing none, is the committee ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Chairperson:** Shall the resolution pass? [*Agreed*]

The resolution is accordingly passed.

That concludes the business before the committee.

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

### IN SESSION

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

### Committee Report

**Mr. Tyler Blashko (Chairperson):** Honourable Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered and adopted four resolutions respecting Interim Supply.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Oxenham), that the report of the committee be received.

*Motion agreed to.*

### Interim Supply Motion

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), that there be granted to His Majesty, on account of Certain Expenditures of the Public Service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026, out of the Consolidated Fund, the sums \$14,708,741,000, being 75 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part A, Operating Expenditures, of those Estimates; \$803,804,000, being 90 per cent of the total amount to be voted on as set out in part B, Capital Investment, of those Estimates; \$845,665,000, being 90 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part C, Loans and Guarantees, of those Estimates; and \$1,267,952,000, being 90 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part D, Capital Investments by Other Reporting Entities, of those Estimates.

**The Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice—

**An Honourable Member:** Dispense

**The Speaker:** The member's reminded to take their seat when the Speaker's standing.

Did I hear a dispense? Dispensed.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill 45—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2025

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 45, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2025; Loi de 2025 portant affectation anticipée de crédits, be now read a first time and ordered for second reading immediately.

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Finance—no.

\* (16:00)

Order, please.

## SECOND READINGS

### Bill 45—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2025

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 45, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2025; Loi de 2025 portant affectation anticipée de crédits, be now read a second time and be referred to Committee of the Whole.

#### *Motion presented.*

**MLA Sala:** The Interim Appropriation Act, 2025, provides interim spending authority for the '25-26 fiscal year, pending approval of the 2025 appropriation act.

Under our parliamentary system, the '24-25 appropriations lapse after March 31, '25. This bill provides for interim appropriations that allows government to continue operating, paying for costs such as keeping the lights on, keeping programs running, student loan payments flowing and so forth, until the business of the Committee of Supply has concluded and the main appropriation act has passed.

The amount of interim operating expenditure authority requested is \$14,708,741,000. This authority represents 75 per cent of the sums included in the part A, Operating Expenditures, of the '25-26 Estimates of Expenditure.

The amount of interim capital investments spending authority in part B requested is \$803,804,000, and this authority represents 90 per cent of the sums included in the part B, Capital Investments, of the '25-26 Estimates of Expenditure.

The amount of loans and loan guarantee expenditure authority requested is \$845,665,000, and this authority represents 90 per cent of the sums included in part C, Loans and Guarantees, of the '25-26 Estimates of Expenditure.

The amount of expenditure authority for capital investments provided as loans to other reporting organizations is \$1,267,952,000. This authority represents 90 per cent of the sums included in part D, Other Reporting Entities Capital Investment, in the '25-26 Estimates of Expenditure.

The amount of expenditures that are authorized for developing or acquiring inventory for subsequent years is \$25 million and the amount of payments for long-term liabilities is \$75 million.

The amount of future commitment authority included in this Interim Supply bill is \$937,500,000. This authority provides for the commitment of

expenditures to ensure the completion of projects or fulfilling contracts initiated but not completed during the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

When this bill reaches the committee stage, I can provide members with a section-by-section explanation of the bill.

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

### Questions

**The Speaker:** A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition member; no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** I want to ask the minister a little bit about the history of interim supply and what we've seen over the past eight years, and how he's come up with some of his numbers and percentages in this year's Interim Supply bill.

You know, in 2017, the second year of the last government's mandate, the Interim Supply bill that year only requested \$4.7 billion, approximately 35 per cent of the total amount that was authorized by the appropriation act for part A, Operating, and up to \$528 million, which was approximately 75 per cent of the total amount authorized by appropriation act for part B, Capital.

But then last year, we saw during Interim Supply, this minister upped those numbers much higher than what would be considered the norm for an interim supply.

In Bill 25 last—

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

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** Yes, I mean, happy to speak to sort of a bit of the history here. If you just look at part A, Interim Supply numbers, last year we asked for 75 per cent to cover the expenses over a nine-month period. If you look at the—what the PCs did in '22-23, the number they requested there was \$12,000,687,000 and that was to fund 75 per cent; and year before, it was \$11,772,000,000 and that was also at 75 per cent.

So you can see, our approach this year is consistent with approaches of government in past years, including the government belonging to the member opposite.

**Mrs. Stone:** So what is not consistent is for the government to now increase to 90 per cent.

So can the minister please explain how going from 75 per cent of the total part B, Appropriation that it was back in 2017 to what it was, a 90 per cent of part B, Appropriation, in 2024, and is again 90 per cent in this Interim Supply today?

**MLA Sala:** So last year in part B, we did 90 per cent, as well, and that's consistent with what the member opposite did in '22-23, '21-22, 2020-21 and 2019-20. So for all of those four years that her team was in government, they also requested 90 per cent of part B, so I'm not clear on the line of questioning here.

\* (16:10)

**Mrs. Stone:** Can we move on to part D. At \$1.2 billion, significant borrowing at 90 per cent, whereas the normal is 75 per cent.

So can minister please explain why he feels he needs 90 per cent in this year's Interim Supply?

**MLA Sala:** I don't feel like the member opposite, the critic, has been well informed by her team, or it would appear that way.

Again, for part D, her team sought 90 per cent in the years 2021, '22 and '23. For three fiscal years, they also requested 90 per cent.

So everything we're doing here is consistent with the exact same decisions that were made by her team when they were in government.

**Mrs. Stone:** Honourable Speaker, there is no pandemic this year, as to what this Interim Supply bill is attributing for third quarter.

So can the minister please explain why he feels that he needs 90 per cent and this much borrowing so early in the process?

**MLA Sala:** Yes. Again, happy to speak to that, as I've already done here.

As we've outlined very clearly, the percentages that we're looking to appropriate here represent the norm that we saw under the former government. And that crosses over not only in those years when we were all facing a pandemic but extends beyond that.

So again, very consistent with the decisions that they made when they were in government.

**Mrs. Stone:** Honourable Speaker, as we've seen, the budget that was released last week paints a very rosy picture of revenue projections.

Forecasts were made with relatively strong real GDP growth assumptions, which, as we know, are being threatened by US and China tariffs as we speak.

Can the minister explain why his budget failed to account for today's economic realities, and is the amount that he's requesting in this borrowing of Interim Supply reflective of what we're seeing with today's trade wars?

**MLA Sala:** You know, we were really proud to bring in a budget that was battle ready and ready for the challenge we're all facing together.

I don't know if the critic has had a chance to speak with many Manitobans or Manitoba business, but what we've heard consistently is, you know, strong reviews of our approach and a lot of support for the approach we used in this budget where we show a path forward and have a very clear approach should we be—have 25 per cent tariffs applied all year long post April 2.

We've painted the worst-case scenario and have identified for Manitobans very transparently what they can expect should we get there.

This budget is ready for whatever comes, and we're proud to have done that hard work of ensuring that we're ready for the challenges—

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

**Mrs. Stone:** As we saw in last week's budget, this NDP government has ballooned debt servicing costs at \$2.3 billion.

So with the amount that this minister is asking to borrow today, how much more interest will this cost Manitobans?

**MLA Sala:** We put forward a plan that's responsible, and that's reflected in our nice, gentle downward slope on our debt-to-GDP ratio we're projecting in the years to come.

Look, this is a government that is fiscally responsible, but also committed to delivering on the things we told Manitobans we would do in the last election, and we're proving that we can do just that: focus on fiscal sustainability while we deliver on those health

care, affordability and education commitments that Manitobans sent us here to deliver on.

Again, I'll remind the member opposite, they left Manitoba with a \$2-billion deficit, so references to fiscal responsibility, given their record, are troublesome, I'll say.

**Mrs. Stone:** Can the minister please tell us how much he is borrowing from Manitoba Hydro outside of this interim appropriation, and in addition to that, how much interest will be paid this year on Manitoba Hydro's borrowing?

**MLA Sala:** We're happy to follow up with that number.

**Mrs. Stone:** Okay. Thank you. I appreciate that.

The minister's budget last week is increasing income taxes to the tune of \$82 million; he's increasing education property taxes to \$182 million, on top of the double-digit education school division taxes facing Manitobans, and he's adding a PST to small businesses at a cost of \$16 million.

Can the minister please explain his justification for taxing middle-class Manitobans while he's raising his own ministers' salaries?

**MLA Sala:** We're lowering taxes for Manitobans, and we're proud to be doing that.

This is a government focused on affordability. This budget saw us reduce a number of taxes; for example, the permanent cut to the gas tax, a tax that the members opposite charged Manitobans every single day that they were in government. We gave Manitobans a holiday for a full year; now we've got a 10 per cent permanent cut.

We brought in a new lift to our affordable homeowner tax credit to help homeowners save even more money on their school taxes. And of course we were very proud to bring in a payroll tax cut to help our businesses thrive and do what they do best, which is create jobs and opportunities for Manitobans.

**Mrs. Stone:** This minister is banking on a significant increase from federal transfers, over \$600 million in additional federal equalization payments.

With an election within the next five weeks, what is his plan if federal transfers don't pan out and are not as promising as his rosy outlook projects?

**MLA Sala:** Well, I trust the good work of the folks in the Department of Finance and in terms of their projections around revenues, and I have trust in civil servants and treat them with respect and believe that

they do good work and that the information they provide us with as political actors is accurate.

We brought forward revenue projections that reflect the good work of our teams. I think they're responsible. We are, of course, in a time of uncertainty. I know the member opposite appreciates that. But we brought forward the most accurate numbers available, because we want to make sure that we're transparent with Manitobans, and that's something they can count on us to be.

And that's very distinct from what the members opposite brought forth in seven and a half years of budgeting in government.

**Mrs. Stone:** Honourable Speaker, it would be nice if this Minister of Finance actually answered a question with specific numbers, so I'll make my next question very clear for him.

Can the minister please tell the House the current actuals for spending for Justice for third quarter of this year?

**MLA Sala:** Again, very happy to provide those specific actuals offline.

**Mrs. Stone:** Okay, considering this government has repeatedly spoken of health care, I will expect that the minister will have these numbers in front of him.

Can the minister please tell the House the current actuals for spending in health care for third quarter of this year?

**MLA Sala:** Back to the Justice question, I can say that the overall lift was 9.2 per cent increase from last year, and, again, we'll follow up with that specific information.

And very happy to follow up for the specific number that the member opposite just requested there as it pertains to health, as well.

**Mrs. Stone:** Okay, I'll give the minister a couple minutes to get some text messages from his Department of Finance staff.

So I'll ask him if the minister can tell the House current actuals for spending for third quarter for overall capital projects.

**MLA Sala:** Yes, again I don't have that detail here. Again, that's—all these specific detailed bits of information are all very clearly outlined in budget. So we will very gladly follow up with any specific details that the member is looking for; no issues doing that.

**Mrs. Stone:** I thank the minister for that.



Many of these capital projects announced in last week's budget, particularly schools, were previously announced by the former PC government. This NDP cancelled some of those and put many of those on hold. Now costs of building materials have skyrocketed, and they're projecting over \$700 million, or \$63.6 million per school in costs.

If the NDP had moved forward with those school projects that were planned a year ago, what cost savings would the NDP have saved had they moved with those projects a year ago rather than waiting a year? If the minister could provide a number as to what one school build would have cost last year verse this year.

**MLA Sala:** Well, it's tough to estimate when the members opposite didn't have, actually, any plan or budget to build those schools. They were just make believe. There was actually no work done to get those in budget, so when you don't have a budget and you don't have any funding for them, they're make-believe schools.

So we're really proud to have come in in a very short order, you know, and really, with our budget last Thursday, announced the important work we're going to do to make sure that kids in Manitoba have access to the good quality schools they need to learn.

\* (16:20)

Proud to be working with an amazing Minister of Education in Minister Schmidt, and actually getting this—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I would just remind the honourable Minister of Finance that we can't use members' names; either their constituency name or their ministerial title.

The honourable Minister of Finance. Honourable Minister of Finance still has the floor.

**MLA Sala:** Appreciate that, Honourable Speaker.

And just to finish what I was sharing there, again, proud—

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

**Mrs. Stone:** Honourable Speaker, can the minister please confirm what some of these appropriations will be used for and whether he believes that all the capital plan will be spent this fiscal year?

**MLA Sala:** Going to follow up on a couple of the questions asked earlier. Just '24-25 Q-3, Health, landing \$8.743 billion, and in Justice \$835 million.

And then to the question, our government is proud to, you know, make a budget that reflects our desire to actual spend. We know that for many years, under the former government, they would make big announcements about investments in transportation and infrastructure and otherwise that they would never meet, and they would underspend routinely by hundreds of millions of dollars.

We're committed to actually spending the money we say we're going to spend and delivering on those commitments to Manitobans. That's—the approach we bring is a transparent one, and Manitobans can count on us to deliver on the things we said we were going to deliver on, and we're proud to bring that approach after many years of failures from the members opposite.

**Mrs. Stone:** Honourable Speaker, we know that borrowing and increasing debt comes on the backs of Manitobans, not just today but in future years to come. So can the minister please explain why his operating is \$14.7 billion in this year's interim versus last year's \$12 billion, almost \$2 billion more this year, and what that additional spending and borrowing will account for?

**MLA Sala:** Well, our budget outlined, you know, an incredible number of initiatives that respond to the priorities of Manitobans, as we heard them in the last election. We continue to do that important work, and, I mean, it starts with our exciting announcement about the biggest capital plan in our province's history: \$3.7 billion to get Manitobans to work.

We're going to keep building on our success in staffing up our health-care system after many years of cuts. We're going to build on the 1,255 individuals we hired. That work continues, and, of course, further investments, as outlined in the budget: 90 new beds, new extended hours, clinics.

The investments continue, and Manitobans sent us here to deliver on these commitments after many years of cuts and the former government taking us backwards. We're doing that—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired. And the time for question period has also expired.

### Debate

**The Speaker:** Are there members wishing to speak in debate?

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** First, I just want to put a few words on the record as to we do recognize on this side of the House the importance of Interim

Supply. As I mentioned earlier in some of my comments, this is going to ensure that the civil service gets paid and ensure that government can essentially keep the lights on and continue with the important operations of the government.

As I did mention earlier, it is very unfortunate that this government continues to fail in its planning, as for the second year in a row they have not brought forward BITSA, the budget implementation bill. And as we know, last year's budget verse this year's budget, there's not a lot of differences. There's a lot of re-announcements; there's a lot of restated promises. So this year's is really just an extension of last year's budget, and it's important distinction to 'compay'—compare the two as we talk about Interim Supply.

And what did we see in last year's budget bill and BITSA bill, is we did see a lot of surprises. And I will go through that a little bit today because what concerns me today, as we're debating and discussing this Interim Supply bill, is under the NDP, when they do bring in BITSA, it does not accurately reflect the budget. It's important that we do ensure that the process that we undertake with the public's finances are taken with the proper scrutiny and to be as clear and concise and transparent with the government's books.

This is why I look forward to this government passing Bill 224, The Budget Bill Public Accountability Act, which will ensure that governments, today, tomorrow and into the future, continue in the spirit of transparency by allowing Manitobans to have their say at public committee on budget bills.

I know affordability, cost of living, inflation, interest rates and, most recently over the past few months, US and China tariffs are all top of mind for Manitobans. And we truly have failed to see the realities of last year's budget reflected again in this year's budget and the economic realities that many Manitobans are facing.

You know, we also know that Manitobans are concerned about capital expenditures and loans, borrowing—we've seen today \$14 billion in requests for borrowing, over \$2 billion from what the government asked for last year. And as a result, this increase of borrowing will increase debt under this NDP government.

You know, what we see with actions of government and this Supply request, it is important that government does have the funds it needs to continue to operate. However, what Interim Supply does offer us is an opportunity, an opportunity to reflect on the

pattern of this NDP government between last year's budget and this year's budget, because, Honourable Speaker, this budget isn't much different than last year's budget, and we did have a few surprises in last year's budget.

In—it is an opportunity today to also talk about an accurate portrayal of what this government has brought forward in this year's budget and Interim Supply. And what we've seen over the past week with this government's budget is an inaccurate portrayal of the economic realities that Canada and Manitoba are facing and the economic realities that many Manitobans are facing as costs of living and inflation continues to rise.

Now, let us go back to this pattern that we have seen with this NDP government and BITSA. The government has shown—this NDP has shown that they are willing to ram not only budgetary items through, but also non-budgetary items without the proper public presentations.

When debating Interim Supply last year, the NDP was not transparent with Manitobans that there would be pieces of legislation—major pieces of legislation—stapled to the back of BITSA. The NDP was not transparent with Manitobans that Manitobans would not get their democratic right to come and speak to BITSA.

So our team, we're trying to stop that loophole by introducing Bill 224, The Budget Bill Public Accountability Act. This will allow Manitobans their democratic right to speak to BITSA at committee and how their hard-earned money is being spent by this NDP government.

If the NDP has nothing to hide in a budget bill, then they should have no problem supporting this bill, that is Bill 224. This is exactly what that bill is supposed to do, is close that loophole.

And what we saw in last year's budget was BITSA was not a reflection of that. There was a single line or a single word mentioned in the budget speech, and then this ended up being major pieces of legislation stapled to the back of a bill that did not go to public committee and for the public to make representations on how their hard-earned tax dollars are being spent.

So now, Honourable Speaker, why do I bring this pattern up during Interim Supply? It is because I can say there are a lot of inconsistencies with this NDP government and the numbers that they put forward. What the NDP says in one budget and what they say in the public are two very different things. And what the NDP says in one budget and what they put in

BITSA are also two different things. There are inconsistencies in numbers.

So I want to speak to this year's budget, because, as I mentioned, it was an extension of last year's budget, and it did not reflect the economic realities that Manitobans have been facing over the past two years.

So first, Honourable Speaker, there is no clarity on the exact economic impacts that Manitoba families and industries are facing today. Other provinces, including Nova Scotia, Alberta and, most recently, Saskatchewan's budget, those governments gave a clear picture of the financial revenue realities with tariffs.

This minister is planning on collecting 9.4 per cent more in personal income tax and 4.2 per cent more from businesses. Yet other provinces are more realistic with their projections.

\* (16:30)

In New Brunswick they are forecasting less than 4 per cent for each; in Saskatchewan, 1.3 per cent from business and 0.1 per cent less from individuals. This is a more transparent and more accurate portrayal of revenue projections that provinces are facing.

Yet what this minister and government decided to do was the opposite. They decided to paint a very rosy picture of what the next year is going to look like, which Manitobans can see right through, because that is not the picture that Manitobans are being faced with every single day.

And this goes back to last year's budget as well. Last year, Manitobans were stretched. They were financially stretched as cost of living continued to increase and foodflation became the highest under this NDP government. Yet this NDP government continued to take more and more. They continued to spend more and more, and they continued to borrow more and more on the backs of Manitobans. And what has happened now, Honourable Speaker, is now we're heading into a possible economic recession and this government is trying to play catch-up on the backs of Manitobans.

The second inconsistency that we've seen between the two budgets, Honourable Speaker, is there is no clarity in how the government plans to spend their contingencies. So, specifically, last week if we look at tariff contingencies, the budget claims \$500 million will go towards helping businesses find new markets to send products, give loans to Manitoba businesses

and support farmers. However, it lacks details on what this actually means.

And this is important when we talk about Interim Supply today, because Manitobans have a right to know when the government is borrowing \$14 billion where that money is going to go. Manitobans deserve to know that those dollars that the minister has set aside for tariff contingencies will actually go to helping farmers, it will actually go to helping producers, it will actually go to helping Manitoba businesses that are faced with these uncertain times. And they deserve to know that these contingencies will not become a slush fund for the NDP's excess funding and funding to special-interest groups at their will. The NDP needs to lay out exactly where those dollars are going to go.

The manufacturing sector from this budget has estimated 49 per cent of jobs in this sector embodied within exports for the US, at over 25,000 jobs, will be hit the hardest, with a projected 55 per cent drop in real GDP as a worst-case scenario. This is followed by the auto sector, motor vehicle parts, at a 46 per cent drop in real GDP. I have spent some of my career working in the manufacturing sector. Many of my colleagues on this side of House have also spent their careers working in agriculture and manufacturing sectors, and we have a very strong understanding as to how devastating these tariffs will be for manufacturers in the ag industry if the US moves forward in the future.

And I recognize, Honourable Speaker, we are in an off-again, on-again situation with the US, but what we do know is that we have 100 per cent tariffs from China. And that is significantly damaging our canola and our pork industry today, as we speak. Those are not hypotheticals; those are the realities that our farmers and producers are facing.

Scott Moe—Premier Scott Moe, Premier Danielle Smith have been very outspoken on the impacts that these—China's tariffs are having on the ag industry in Canada and in their provinces. And we have heard nothing from this Premier (Mr. Kinew) as to what those impacts are here in Manitoba and very little concern from this Premier and this minister as to those devastating effects that our farmers and our producers are facing today, not next week, not the week after that, but they are facing those today.

So if this does happen, Honourable Speaker, and the US does move forward with those additional tariffs, not only are we caught in a tariff war with China, but then we also have the US tariffs on top of that. The

NDP government needs to send a clear commitment and a message that these dollars will go to supporting those industries.

And, quite frankly, if the tariffs don't happen, then Manitobans deserve to hear what the government's plan is with those dollars. As I mentioned, we are going to ensure and hold this government to account, that that half a million dollars does not become a slush fund for the NDP spending; \$500 million set aside for those producers, businesses and farmers in the event that tariffs take place. That is not just for the NDP to spend at their will and on their special interest groups.

So I need to question the minister as to what his plans are for those dollars. Will they be put in a rainy day fund in case another crisis does hit? Will they be used to balance the deficit, his ever growing deficit, that has been projected year after year since this NDP came into government? With a billion dollars total in contingency set aside and no tariffs, there's no reason why this NDP cannot balance the budget this year.

Now, I recognize that if tariffs do take effect—and they are, as I had mentioned earlier, on China—that those absolutely need to go to the farmers and the producers and the businesses that are feeling those impacts of those tariffs.

Now, another discrepancy and inconsistency that I want to speak at is they have no credible plan to balance the budget. We saw this last year. They painted a rosy picture that they were going to balance the budget while still increasing spending at 4 per cent, while still posting a higher than expected deficit of almost \$1.3 billion in December, and that was before tariffs took effect.

I want to speak to debt servicing, because we are here to talk about Interim Supply today, and debt servicing costs and borrowing is a big part of that. Debt servicing has now become the third largest department, overtaking the Department of Families. I'm sure the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) is not too pleased with that, because those—that \$2.3 billion could go to help a lot of individuals in need and a lot of Manitobans who are stretched financially.

With \$66 million more in debt servicing costs this year alone, that is diverting money, dollars, from Health, Infrastructure and Manitobans' pockets.

So to put it into perspective, Honourable Speaker, doing some quick math: \$2.3 billion and we have 1.3 million people in the province of Manitoba; that's around \$1,700 out of every single Manitobans'

pockets that is going directly to Bay Street and Wall Street money lenders.

The minister and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) have claimed over the past year that they would be belt tightening, yet the numbers do not reflect this. This is the inconsistencies between last year's budget and this year's budget. We saw no belt tightening this year, Honourable Speaker. In fact, we actually saw an increase in spending, upwards of 7 per cent.

At a time when we are facing a recession and significant job losses, this NDP government is actually increasing spending at a time of high interest rates, at a time of job losses and at a time of an affordability crisis. Yet, at the same time, they're giving themselves higher salaries.

What the NDP say in their budget and what the NDP say in their Interim Supply bill are two different things. And, quite frankly, what the NDP says in their budget and Interim Supply and BITSA is very different than what they tell the cameras and what they tell the public.

The reality is a rosy, unrealistic budget that does not reflect the economic realities that Manitoba is facing.

So let's just take a look at what this government is basing their growth on: (1) high revenue growth projections at a time of economic uncertainty that will essentially collapse with US and China tariffs. This is incredibly unrealistic and does not paint a true reality—fiscal reality—that Manitoba is facing.

(2) They're predicting high federal transfer production—projections—\$650-million increase at a time when we're not only just going through a federal election that will happen in five weeks, but Manitoba is becoming increasingly reliant—heavily reliant—on other provinces for those transfer payments that are also being hit with US and China tariffs.

(3) The high net income of Manitoba Hydro: while Hydro needs to spend billions more on capital and infrastructure upgrades, this minister hasn't taken to account any potential droughts that will actually reduce the amount of revenue that Hydro could take in.

So like I said, Honourable Speaker, this NDP has painted a rosy picture of revenue growth for the province over the past two years that's unrealistic for today's economic climate, and the big thing is it allows no room for error.

\* (16:40)

We are entering a crisis right now. The NDP is playing catch-up as a result of last year's budget and increased spending and increased borrowing and increased deficits and increased debt, and now they're trying to play catch-up. And that is not the fiscal realities that Manitoba is facing today.

And in this catch-up, if another crisis hits, Honourable Speaker; if Manitoba suddenly has a major flood; if Manitoba suddenly has significant drought and forest fires up north; if suddenly we have another trade war, another global situation that will impact Manitoba and Manitoba's finances, the budget does not allow any room to pivot.

And this minister and this government has proven that they do not have the ability to pivot when crisis hits, because this budget is not a clear reflection of today. And quite frankly, over the past two years, this NDP has missed the mark and missed the moment on Manitobans.

The NDP, over the past two years, they have not been taking the economy and affordability and costs of living seriously since being elected, and Manitobans are now seeing that in this year's budget. And this is what's a pattern, Honourable Speaker. They didn't see it in last year's budget, even though that tax relief was very much needed. Manitobans were already stretched in last year's budget, and again this pattern continues. They're not seeing the tax relief in this year's budget, despite cost of living, inflation, interest rates and affordability getting worse and Manitobans being stretched beyond their means.

So what do we see year after year with this NDP government? We see higher taxes, we see higher deficits, we see more borrowing. We saw—we're seeing it today, in today's Interim Supply—\$14 billion in borrowing; \$2 billion more than they asked for last year. And last year was significantly higher than what was asked for the year before. But this is what this NDP government does. They come in, they tax, they spend and they borrow Manitoba further and further into debt on the backs of Manitobans.

As we saw in last week's budget, this NDP government completely misses the moment for Manitobans, and as I mentioned last year, they did—they had an opportunity. There was no crisis, there was no economic recession. There were no US tariffs. There were no China tariffs. They had every opportunity to rein in their spending, pay down the debt and balance the books. And they chose not to.

That was a choice that this minister and this NDP government made, and unfortunately for Manitobans, now we are hitting an economic crisis. Now we are hitting more costs-of-living challenges, and this NDP is trying to play catch-up when they should have planned for contingencies, they should have planned for anything that could happen globally in their budget, and they didn't.

This is not a government that knows how to plan, Honourable Speaker, and that is reflected in last week's budget as well. This budget seems that it was thrown together without the economic realities that Manitoba and Canada are facing today. It seemed that it was unplanned and that they just added a contingency on the side to make themselves look good in the public and the media, but without any plan or actions in how to spend that contingency should US tariffs hit.

This is the reality, Honourable Speaker. This is what we've seen over the past two years. These budgets are unplanned documents that don't reflect today's climate. There is a lot of words but no foundation and no action plan, and we saw this last year too.

Now, where this budget is an extension of last year's budget is there is a lot of reannounced promises, promises that Manitobans have been hearing since the election and, quite frankly, before. This government seems to have a challenge with making a promise, but then actually implementing that promise.

As with typical NDP governments, and we saw it 15 years ago, 10 years ago and we're seeing it again today. This is a budget, over the past two years, over the past 17 months, of tax, tax, tax, spend, spend, spend, borrow, borrow, borrow, debt, debt, debt.

Last year during Interim Supply, this NDP government authorized totals over \$12 billion, and that was just a few months into their mandate and was well above years prior, and now we're seeing those numbers increasing again to over \$12 billion. And last year during Interim Supply, we warned—we warned at that time that this level of borrowing was a concerning start to their government.

Today, this NDP government's asking for over \$12 billion in borrowing, so that's a total of \$24 billion in borrowing over just 17 months of their government. Manitoba's debt servicing costs are growing each year under this NDP government. We're now up to \$2.3 billion of interest payments going to Bay Street and Wall Street on the back of today's Manitobans,

our children's, our grandchildren's and future generations.

The fact that debt servicing cost is now the third largest government department should be concerning enough for Manitobans. That's \$1,700 per Manitoban on just interest costs alone. Asking Manitobans to provide even more money while they dig deeper into their pockets is not providing the citizens of this province with any sense of security on how the government manages their money. And if 17 months is any indication, Manitobans should be deeply, deeply concerned.

We do recognize that there are basic operations of governments that need to continue and, of course, this is what the Interim Supply bill is intended for. However, let me repeat again, Honourable Speaker: in this Interim Supply bill, they have authorized \$12 billion of new borrowing and debt, \$24 billion since being elected last October in their short 17 months and not even halfway through their mandate. And this is all at a time of high borrowing costs and high interest rates.

The reality is, Honourable Speaker, is this NDP government plans to run large deficits for many years to come despite inflation rising, despite costs of living rising, despite goods and products rising and despite federal transfers growing significantly.

What we need to do, Honourable Speaker, and what the NDP government needs to do is they need to focus on growing the economy and growing private sector jobs to bring in that revenue. I know this is against the NDP's ideology, but they are caught between reality and ideology. And the reality is the private sector pulls the social cart. They are the economic horse. It is our manufacturing plants; it is our farmers; it is our producers; it is our small businesses that are the economic horse. But that social cart is getting larger and larger and larger.

Constant borrowing is also not the answer. It is the surest way to increase debt and inflation. What we need, Honourable Speaker, is we need higher income. We need higher income through private sector jobs that will increase more revenue—government revenue—at the same tax rate, not just taxpayer-funded jobs but actually private sector jobs that lift Manitobans up, that employ the workers because, by contrast, tackling fiscal problems with higher taxes on Manitobans and on those businesses actually employing Manitobans is adding further to the affordability challenges that we are seeing today, and this will continue to drive up cost inflations and people's overall ability to spend to the economy.

The NDP has said for 17 months that they will commit to fighting inflation, but we saw with the previous NDP government they had an opportunity to set that money aside when there were good times that were realized in Manitoba during that period of time. But what did they do? They showed their true colours like the NDP always did. They taxed, they spent and they borrowed.

In last year's budget debate and Interim Supply debate, I said the same thing, that the NDP needed to start controlling their spending to reduce the deficit and to manage borrowing and interest costs.

This time, however, a year later, the situation is much, much worse and much more dire for Manitobans. Economists are actually predicting that we could be entering an economic recession. Yet this government continues to spend; they continue to borrow, and they continue to put Manitoba into more debt.

\* (16:50)

And the reality is, Honourable Speaker, over the past 17 months—we saw it a year ago, we're seeing it again today—the NDP is taxing us out of competitiveness; they're spending beyond their means, and now we're in an affordability and economic crisis. And this NDP government is trying to play catch-up.

The NDP has put off building our economy for 17 months and now, during a tariff war and economic slowdown, they decide to speed things up with lofty and unrealistic goals that do not paint an accurate portrayal of what Manitoba is actually facing. Expecting Manitobans to spend more into the economy while not offering them any relief to do so, Honourable Speaker, is unrealistic.

Instead of making those urgent investments needed to support Manitobans facing those costs-of-living rises and US and China tariffs, they've failed to add any meaningful, long-term solution.

So let's just look at their record over the past 17 months, Honourable Speaker. I know I only have a couple minutes left. Unemployment has increased over 6 per cent. Manitoba's leading the nation in food and housing inflation. We are last in the country—second last in the country—for energy, mining and forestry investment. We've seen big declines in our economy, and that was before tariff and trade wars. We've had the highest in education property taxes: over \$330 million in the past year, and that is on top of double-digit increases to school division taxes. Plus, we saw the highest gas tax hike in Manitoba history and the highest MPI rate increase in decades.

In fact, the NDP could have invested in the 2023 PC commitments on capital projects in 2024. Instead, they cancelled and delayed those projects, whereas costs have now skyrocketed, and we have 25 per cent tariffs on steel and aluminum. And who knows what's to come?

Those capital projects that could have been done a year ago, without tariffs that the NDP cancelled and delayed and are now reannouncing, are going to cost significantly more than had they just followed the plan and built those schools to begin with.

The reality is, is this NDP government is actually divorced from reality. What they say in their budget, what they say in their Interim Supply bill and what they tell the public are two different things.

Ultimately, Honourable Speaker, to conclude my remarks, we cannot keep allowing NDP governments to run deficit after deficit and increase borrowing, borrowing and, ultimately, debts on the future of Manitobans: \$14 billion in borrowing in this year's Interim Supply bill. And, as I've spoken countless times before, unless we have adequate investment from our private sector, we're going to lose a huge amount of our opportunity in Manitoba to unleash our economic potential.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker

**Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland):** It's always a pleasure to rise in this House and speak on matters that matter to constituents and to all Manitobans, especially these days. With the uncertainty, it's very clear—the uncertainty with regard to the tariffs and the trade war, both the American tariffs as well as Chinese tariffs that are doing so much to devastate farms and businesses in our economy already.

Clearly, these are consequential times that we are living through, and we as legislators, in this body, have a responsibility—and the NDP government has a responsibility—to be listening to business leaders, to be listening to farmers and industry stakeholders and all Manitobans, even moms and dads, many of whom are going through difficult times.

And let me tell you, I've been talking the last couple of days with some constituents who are in very dire straits. They're doing their very best to try to stay above water and, you know, they're putting a brave face on and working hard and doing all the right things, but this economy is just not working for them—this NDP economy is just not working for them.

And, you know, a couple of concerning stats that just confirm that this government is nowhere to be found and is really making things more difficult: According to the latest MNP Consumer Debt Index, half of Manitoba residents indicated they are \$200 or less away from insolvency. Half of Manitoba families are \$200 or less away from bankruptcy. Nearly a third say they are already insolvent: a significant jump of 11 points. Clearly these are challenging times and the last thing we need is a government that continues to raise taxes and spend more money and jack up the provincial debt.

So I'll talk about a couple of those things in my remarks in the couple of minutes that we have left for today. You know, and as I said, these are consequential times. The NDP came to office promising change and promising to flip the switch and things would be better. Clearly that hasn't happened; in fact things have gotten worse. The—this NDP government is presiding over a set of serious and 'deteriating' problems on a number of fronts.

When it comes to health care, ER wait times are 20 per cent higher since they took office. When it comes to the—to crime, we've all heard stories of vandalism and property theft as well as violent crime, and the most startling statistic, I think, is that the 'harmicide' rate nearly doubled in rural Manitoba alone last year on their watch. The unemployment rate, which was at 4.2 per cent when they were elected, is now well over 6 per cent. The unemployment rate going up, that's a jump of 50 per cent.

So as I said, 'deteriating' metrics wherever you look, and this NDP government seems to be content to just carry on their same—the same path they're on of more tax, more spend, more debt, and Manitobans are getting less. This NDP government is expecting Manitobans to give more, and Manitobans are getting less for it.

And so I think, you know, there's—as I said on—a number of metrics. For instance, Manitoba has the highest inflation in Canada at 3.5 per cent: some of the highest increases in food and housing costs in the country. Another startling statistic is 50,000 Manitobans reliant on food banks each month, and again, that's crazy. Manitoba is the breadbasket for the country. We grow many wonderful crops across this province. There's no reason that 50,000 Manitobans should be reliant on food banks.

And so that's a concern as well. But what has this NDP government put forward? Well as I said, a budget

full of tax hikes that really they've done a good job of hiding, of burying in the budget. And we can pick apart some of those, but, for instance, the education property tax rebate, which is now supposed to—which now stands at \$1,600. So it's a \$100—it's a mere \$100 increase from where it was last year.

But the reality is that at the same time, this government projects that they will be collecting an additional \$182 million in property taxes this year, so even with that \$100 increase to the school property tax rebate, the government, this NDP government is still projecting to—still anticipating to collect almost \$200 more in school property taxes.

So at the end of the day, Manitobans aren't saving; they're actually paying more. And that's just one area in which they've been very clever. This government, you've got to give it to them, is very good at projecting

an—a positive image of themselves. They're very good at TikTok. But the reality is that Manitobans are paying more and getting less, as I said.

So that's a concern, and it's up to us as colleagues on the PC side of the House, on this side of the House, to bear that out and to hold the government to account. Because these are serious times, as I said, with the trade war, the uncertainty. Now is the time perhaps, I think, when Manitobans and Canadians would say, okay, if there was ever a time to borrow—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

When this—the hour being 5 o'clock, when this matter is next before the House, the honourable member will have 23 minutes remaining.

This House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Monday, March 24, 2025**

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