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**of the**

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
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**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
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BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
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<i>Vacant</i>	The Pas-Kameesak	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 23, 2026

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

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

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

Please be seated.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader):** Would you please call for second reading debate on Bill 228, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Distribution of Surplus Funds).

## SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

**Bill 228—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Distribution of Surplus Funds)**

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that we will go to second reading of Bill 228, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Distribution of Surplus Funds).

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** I move, seconded by the member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza), that Bill 228, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Distribution of Surplus Funds), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mrs. Cook:** I am very pleased to rise today to start second reading debate on Bill 228, an amendment to The Workers Compensation Act that introduces a clear, fair and disciplined approach to managing surplus funds within Manitoba's workers' compensation system. At its core, this bill is about balance, balance between fiscal responsibility and fairness, between protecting injured workers and respecting the employers who fund the system and between stability and accountability.

So let us begin with what the legislation actually does. It recognizes the importance of a simple concept: the funding ratio, defined as the total assets of the Workers Compensation Board divided by its total liabilities. This is a transparent measure of the system's financial health. For the first time, the board will be required by law to calculate this ratio annually, well in advance of setting employer assessments. That alone is a step forward in accountability and predictability.

But the bill does not stop at measurement. It takes the next logical step: action. When the system is overfunded—that is, when the funding ratio exceeds 1.25—the board is no longer permitted to simply accumulate excess reserves. It must act. It must return surplus funds to the employers who paid into the system, bringing the ratio down to a more reasonable level, but no lower than full funding. This is not reckless. It is responsible stewardship.

And when the ratio falls between 1.15 and 1.25, the board is given discretion. It may return funds if appropriate, but it is not compelled to do so. This flexibility ensures that decisions can still reflect economic conditions, risk forecasts and long-term sustainability. In other words, this bill combines firm rules with prudent judgment.

Some may ask why this matters or why we should concern ourselves with surplus funds and a compensation system designed to support injured workers. And the answer is simple.

The system is funded by employers—large and small businesses across Manitoba that pay into it year after year. These contributions are not taxes, they are premiums intended to cover real and anticipated costs. When those premiums exceed what is necessary to

maintain a strong and stable system, fairness demands that the excess not be stockpiled indefinitely.

This bill recognizes that principle. It says, clearly, the WCB is not a profit-generating entity, it is a public trust. Its role is not to accumulate wealth but to manage risk, provide compensation and maintain stability. When it has more than it needs, it should return that excess to those who funded it.

But, at the same time, I want to be equally clear that nothing in this bill undermines the protection of workers. The requirement that the funding ratio not fall below 1.0 ensures that the system remains fully funded at all times. Injured workers will continue to receive the benefits and support they are entitled to without interruption or risk. In fact, by enforcing disciplined financial management, this bill strengthens the long-term sustainability of the system.

There's also an economic dimension to consider. Manitoba's employers operate in a competitive environment. Predictable costs matter and fairness matters. When businesses know that they will not be overcharged over the long term and that excess contributions will be returned, they can plan, invest and grow with greater confidence. This is particularly important for small- and medium-sized enterprises for whom every dollar counts.

The requirement that distributions be made within 30 days of calculating the funding ratio ensures timeliness and efficiency. This is not a vague promise of future relief, it is a concrete obligation with a clear timeline. And the proportional distribution among class E employers ensures that the process is equitable. Those who contributed more receive more, in a manner determined by the board.

This bill also enhances transparency. By mandating the annual calculation of the funding ratio and tying clear actions to specific thresholds, it creates a framework that is understandable not only to policy-makers but to employers and the public. It reduces ambiguity and builds trust.

In many ways, this amendment reflects a broader principle that should guide all public institutions: accountability for results. It is not enough to manage funds competently. Those funds must also be managed fairly, with respect for the people and the businesses who provide them. And Bill 228 embodies that principle.

Now, I recognize that some may have concerns about volatility, about whether returning surplus funds could lead to fluctuations in assessments in future

years. And that's a valid question. But the safeguards built into this bill address that concern. The thresholds of 1.15 and 1.25 create a buffer, allowing the board to maintain a healthy margin above full funding. The prohibition against dropping below 1.0 ensures that the system remains secure. And the board retains discretion within a defined range, allowing it to respond to changing circumstances.

\* (10:10)

Some may also say the WCB already has a surplus distribution policy whereby funds are distributed and thus say that this legislation is unnecessary. I disagree. While it's true that WCB has a policy, Manitoba's Workers Compensation Board is often one of the most overfunded boards in Canada. For example, before a refund was issued last year, the funding ratio was at 1.6, 160 per cent of what the board needed.

Mandating a surplus distribution at 125 per cent is a more reasonable approach for employers, and it also provides businesses with the fairness and certainty they need to operate. This is not a rigid or reckless approach. It is measured, thoughtful and grounded in sound financial principles. It is about respecting the contributions of employers while safeguarding the rights of workers. It is about transparency, accountability and responsible governance.

This legislation has strong support from Manitoba businesses and the organizations that represent them, including the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Manitoba Restaurant & Foodservices Association and Restaurants Canada.

We have to keep in mind that this is employers' money. It's not taxpayer funds or a gift from the government. This is money that belongs to employers. And if the WCB is in an overfunded position, it should endeavour to get those funds back to employers as quickly as possible because small businesses will undoubtedly invest those funds back into their businesses and back into Manitobans. Surplus distribution back to employers represents a form of meaningful cost relief for small businesses who've been forced to stretch their dollar like everyone else.

We have before us an opportunity to strengthen a vital public system, to modernize its financial management and to reinforce public confidence in its operation. Bill 228 achieves all of these goals in a clear and practical way.

I urge all members of this House to support this legislation and, in doing so, send a message that we

believe in fair dealing, in fiscal responsibility and in a workers' compensation system that works for everyone it serves.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### Questions

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

The floor is now open for questions.

**MLA Shannon Corbett (Transcona):** The WCB is supposed to be a collaboration. It works for employers as well as for workers.

Can the member opposite please share who they have consulted with?

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** That's a great question and one I'm happy to answer.

On this bill, I've consulted with a number of Manitoba businesses and organizations that represent them, including the Canadian Federation of Independent Business supports this legislation, Restaurants Canada and the Manitoba Restaurant & Foodservices Association.

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** Can the MLA refer to similar legislation in Canada that shows this idea in action?

**Mrs. Cook:** I thank my colleague from Portage la Prairie for that question. This bill is modelled on very similar legislation in Ontario, which has sort of set the bar for provinces that have mandated the surplus distribution requirement in legislation.

And, under Bill 228, the WCB in Manitoba, like that in Ontario, could issue refunds once assets exceed liabilities by 15 per cent and would be required to do so when that ratio reaches 25 per cent.

**MLA Corbett:** I thank the member opposite for partially answering my question.

But my follow-up is, which workers have you consulted with?

**Mrs. Cook:** That's an interesting question coming from the member opposite.

The employees of many of these small businesses will support this policy because they know that their employers are going to invest these funds back into their businesses, whether that's in the form of higher wages or more jobs.

I don't expect that the members opposite have a great sense of how small businesses tend to operate, but they—every dollar counts to them, and these refunds, these rebates of their dollars—this is employer dollars—matter—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Cook:** —to them.

**The Speaker:** Just before recognizing the next member, I would remind all members to make sure they're always directing their comments and questions through the Chair.

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** I would really like to thank the member for Roblin for bringing this very important legislation forward to be debated here in the House today. *[interjection]*

The WCB currently issues funds through an ad hoc policy: What would putting this requirement into law bring to Manitoba employers?

**Mrs. Cook:** Thank you to my colleague from Brandon West for the question.

I—it was difficult to hear him at the beginning because the Premier (Mr. Kinew) was heckling so loudly, but I think he was asking me what putting this requirement in law would bring to Manitoba employers. *[interjection]*

The Premier and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe)—I know they love the sound of their own voices and they think they're the smartest people in every room, but I actually have the floor, not them, so hopefully they can stop heckling me.

The bill would bring fairness and predictability for Manitoba employers by ensuring that excess funds are returned to the businesses that paid those funds in a timely and fair manner.

**MLA Corbett:** The bill says surplus funds must be distributed within 30 days after the ratio hits 1.25.

Why such a short timeline? Doesn't this remove the board's ability to review economic conditions or claim trends before handing out millions of dollars?

**Mrs. Cook:** I'd encourage the member to give the legislation a slightly closer read.

It does require a surplus distribution within 30 days of calculating the ratio, not necessarily the moment the ratio hits 1.25. But the WCB is a modern Crown corporation with nearly 600 employees. I'm very confident that it can rebate employer funds to employers upon calculating the funding ratio.

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I want to thank the member from Roblin for bringing forward this important bill here today.

This bill would limit refunds to class E employers, and I want to ask the member from Roblin, can she advise why she took this approach?

**Mrs. Cook:** Thank you to my colleague from Agassiz for the question. That's a great question.

So section 73 of The Workers Compensation Act groups employers into four broad classes, classes B to E. Class E employers pay for the costs of the workers' compensation system based on their payroll and their claim costs experience. These employers are subject to the collective liability provisions of the act.

Employers in classes B to D are individually liable for the claim costs of their workers, plus their share of administrative costs of the workers' compensation system.

**MLA Corbett:** Bill 228 says surplus payments—payouts go to all class E employers who paid their premiums with no link to safety records.

Why should companies with repeated safety violations get the same rebate as those investing in safe workplaces? Doesn't that remove the incentive to prevent injuries?

**Mrs. Cook:** That's not at all what the bill says.

And, again, I'd encourage the member for Transcona (MLA Corbett) to take a closer read of the bill.

**MLA Bereza:** Does the MLA see implementation of this legislation as part of a whole-of-government approach to competitiveness?

**Mrs. Cook:** Absolutely.

We know that small businesses in Manitoba are struggling. They're struggling with factors well beyond their control—whether that's the impact of tariffs, rising costs generally, the fact that food inflation in Manitoba is higher than every other province, the measures put in place by the NDP government that have made it harder for businesses to operate—so ensuring that employers receive their

surplus distribution within a timely manner is one way of providing meaningful cost relief to Manitoba businesses that are struggling. *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Corbett:** Given that the bill requires cutting the funding ratio to 1.15 or lower whenever 1.25 is breached and permits discretionary distributions even between 1.15 and 1.25, why did you choose these particular thresholds without any economic cycle testing, catastrophic event reserve or board-certified risk assessment?

What evidence shows that 1.15 is sufficient to absorb market shocks and claim surges without destabilizing rates?

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I would just remind the member from Transcona to make sure they're always addressing their comments through the Chair.

**Mrs. Cook:** I'll try again to explain this for the member.

So 1.15 is the lower threshold. The board is not required to do a surplus distribution down to 1.15. It has the discretion to do so depending on market conditions and what the board feels it needs in that reserve to cover the needs of injured workers.

\* (10:20)

I chose 1.25 because that's more consistent with what boards across the country have chosen as their upper threshold. The upper threshold currently is 1.3; I think Manitoba employers would say that's unnecessary. And, routinely, the last four or five years, Manitoba's WCB has been in an overfunded position. Most recently, they were at 1.6, which is far too high.

**Mr. Balcaen:** I'd like to thank the member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook) for taking the time to explain and walk the members opposite through the bill with the information that's clearly already in the bill, and have that discussion and formalize it for them. So I'd really like to thank her for doing that.

I also notice in the bill that Workers Compensation should be able to distribute surplus funds within 30 days: I'm just wondering, is that feasible under this act?

**Mrs. Cook:** Thank you again to my colleague from Brandon West for the thoughtful question.

And, again, I have every confidence that WCB is a modern Crown entity with nearly 600 employees,

has the resources and the ability to conduct a surplus distribution within 30 days of calculating its funding ratio.

It's important to keep in mind this is employers' money. It's not taxpayer dollars, it's not a grant from the government or from WCB. This is money employers paid into the fund. And if WCB is in an overfunded position, they should endeavour to get those funds back to employers as quickly as possible.

We feel, on this side of the House, that 30 days is a reasonable timeline.

**MLA Corbett:** Bill 228 focuses on paying employers when reserves are high, but injured workers depend on stable funding for wage replacement and rehab.

If reserves are drained by mandatory payouts, how will the Workers Compensation Board guarantee that benefits for workers won't be cut or delayed during tough times?

**Mrs. Cook:** Again, I know the member opposite was given a list of questions to ask, but I encourage them to read the bill, because that safeguard is built into the bill. The board is not allowed to do a surplus distribution that would lower its funding ratio beyond what it needs to support the needs of injured workers.

Nothing in this bill undermines the protection of workers. It's interesting that that's how members opposite are going to choose to frame their opposition to this bill, but it's entirely inaccurate. There are safeguards written into the bill to prevent exactly that. *[interjection]*

Again, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) likes to heckle. I—interested to see what he has to get up and say about this bill, since he sees it worth his time to be in here this morning. I appreciate his presence here, but if he has something to say, he should say it on the record. *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I would ask the honourable First Minister and the member from La Vérendrye, if they wish to have a conversation, to take it to the loge, so that I can hear what's being said.

The—one more note. We need to make sure we're not commenting, if the honourable member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook) made a comment about a member being present or absent, that's not allowed.

No further questions?

## Debate

**The Speaker:** Then the floor is open for debate.

**Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister responsible for the Workers Compensation Board):** It's my pleasure to get up this morning and actually be able to thank the folks at WCB for all the good work that they do for Manitobans each and every day, so from the folks at SAFE Work Manitoba, that's a division of the WCB that is dedicated to workplace injury and illness prevention, to the work of SAFE Workers of Tomorrow, whose mission it is to ensure that young people and new workers to Manitoba understand the right to a safe workplace.

WCB also has part of their organization a strong finance team, including investment officers and actuaries. WCB has compensation services and case management teams, HR, IT, strategy and innovation, admin and legal services. There is also a board of directors made up of workers, employers and public interest representatives. And I'd like to thank all of them for the work that they do for Manitobans every day.

I'd like to remind the House that, currently, there is a comprehensive review, a legislative review of The Workers Compensation Act going on. And I'd like to thank the appointed committee members—again, representatives from Labour and employers and the public interest. There are the WCB administrators and staff that are supporting this important legislative review work, and this committee has a big task to provide recommendations for the Province to consider to make possible future amendments to The Workers Compensation Act.

Questions and concerns and issues, such as the one that the member opposite is raising regarding the distribution of surplus funds, could also be potentially raised during the legislative review. This committee and its administrators would have the background and the financial analysis capacity to take a look at ideas such as this, that the member opposite has raised, to judge clearly and well its financial impact on the WCB and to judge if the WCB would still be able to carry out its very, very crucial mandate for Manitobans.

I think it's important to this debate to remind the House of that very mandate, and the mission of the WCB. Founded in 1916, during a time of heavy industrialization when many workers were experiencing work-related illnesses, injury and death and employers were facing crippling lawsuits, Manitobans

came together to come up with a system that recognized workers' needs and employers' needs. WCB's key principles result from a compromise where injured workers gave up the right to sue employers in exchange for guaranteed no-fault benefits, while employers agreed to fund the system in return for protection from lawsuits.

The foundational principles of workers' compensation are called the Meredith Principles, named after the Chief Justice who led the Royal Commission to study workers' compensation systems and make recommendations for a better, more equitable system.

There are five main principles: no-fault compensation, injuries are compensated regardless of who caused them; collective liability, this covers employers collectively to share the costs of the system; security of payment, a dedicated fund ensures compensation is always available to injured workers; exclusive jurisdiction, workers' compensation boards have exclusive authority over claims; an independent administration, the system is administered by an independent board separate from the government.

In evaluating the merit of the member opposite's idea regarding the distribution of surplus funds, or to even think about any possible changes, we would have to see how this idea would affect or be in line with the Meredith Principles.

Specifically, the Meredith principle in question, potentially most affected by the member opposite's idea, is the one regarding security of payment: making sure there is a dedicated fund that can ensure compensation is always available to injured workers.

I would stress to members opposite, as I have stressed to the Legislative Review Committee, tasked to make recommendations on any possible future amendments to The Workers Compensation Act, is that it is very important to ensure that any changes remain aligned to the foundational principles of workers' compensation and to evaluate how effective the workers' compensation system is in meeting the needs of Manitoba's evolving economy and workforce.

No, I'm not an actuary or an institutional investor, but the WCB certainly does have a financial team that includes these professionals, as I mentioned earlier in my list of thanks to the folks at WCB. And the financial team have determined to be, in keeping with the foundational principle of security of payment—making sure that there is a dedicated fund that can ensure compensation is always available to injured

workers—it has been determined that the WCB's funding ratio target is 130 per cent, meaning the accident fund is sufficient to fully fund 100 per cent of all current and future liabilities, plus an additional 30 per cent to protect the system from risk. The funding ratio target is based on long-term financial analysis, with the main objective of maintaining rate stability while protecting the system against risk, against uncertainty and against market volatility.

\* (10:30)

The members' opposite idea regarding the distribution of funds and lowering the ratio target, their idea of this more aggressive distribution policy is risky and reckless and would contravene a founding principle that ensures security of payment for injured, ill or killed workers.

The member opposite, in their debate, has not provided sufficient financial analysis that would upend the current funding ratio and distribution policy that has been put in place very carefully, to be carefully determined to keep the system going and protect WCB funds even as Canadian, US and world markets face risk, uncertainty and market volatility.

My other colleagues on this side of the House will be able to point out, in the course of this ongoing second reading debate, that Manitoba employers, class E, that the member opposite refers to in their idea of lowering the funding ratio, pay currently the lowest premiums in Canada, and they do that thanks to the good work of many, many Manitoba employers and workers who value and care strongly for worker safety and illness and injury and worker death prevention.

Currently, WCB has a rebate program. It's a program that reduces the risk of workplace injury and illness by rewarding employers who have developed and maintained meaningful workplace safety and health management systems.

The WCB SAFE Work Manitoba division is the one that administers this prevention rebate program and can determine employer eligibility and issues the prevention rebate. In addition to this, over the last two years, the WCB, as the member opposite indicated, has rebated, in 2024, \$118 million back to employers, and in 2025, \$122 million back to employers.

We, in Manitoba, have come a long way from the early dangerous days when worker safety was not a priority. And that's thanks to the advocacy, hard work, protests, research, funds raised and, unfortunately, even bloodshed of workers because of workers' movements and unions standing up for workplace



safety and health. But there is still a lot of work to do on this front.

Every year in Manitoba, we see dozens still of work-related deaths and tens of thousands here in Manitoba of work-related illnesses and work-related injuries. Workers' movements have accomplished much over the years, but there is still a lot of work remaining to do on this front, and our government is committed to do that work alongside workers. And it's important that the WCB remains fully capable of carrying out this important work.

Members opposite have proposed a risky, reckless bill, and, unfortunately, I don't even have to ask if they've consulted workers across Manitoba because I already know they haven't. If they did, workers would tell you that they would prefer to see some of that surplus money go more into prevention of safety, prevention of illness, prevention of work-related injury, prevention—

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

**Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations):** Honourable Speaker, I rise today to speak on Bill 228, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act. This bill is being framed as a benefit to employers but, in reality, it weakens a system that Manitobans rely on every day.

Workers' compensation is not a surplus fund to be emptied when convenient, it is an insurance system designed to be there when things go wrong. It must be stable, predictable and resilient in the face of risk.

Bill 228 replaces evidence-based decision making with a rigid formula. It forces the Workers Compensation Board to issue rebates whenever the funding ratio exceeds 1.25, regardless of economic conditions, claim trends or emerging risks. That is not prudent management. It is reckless policy dressed up as simplicity—simplicity, simplicity—yes, I got it right.

Honourable Speaker—[interjection] Well, you're listening; that's great, for once.

Honourable Speaker, Manitoba already has one of the strongest workers' compensation systems in the country. We have the lowest average assessment rate in Canada, just ninety–95 of 100 on payroll, because reserves are managed carefully and responsibly.

The board already returned surplus funds when it is safe to do so. We saw that with \$818 million in 2024 and \$122 million in 2025. Those decisions were grounded in evidence and long-term planning, not

political interference. Bill 228 replaces that careful judgment with a 30-day payout requirement. That's not stability, it's a recipe for volatility.

Honourable Speaker, this bill also weakens prevention. Every dollar forced out of the system is a dollar that cannot be invested in safer workplaces, stronger enforcement and better supports for injured workers. We know the reality: inspectors issue thousands of orders every year because unsafe conditions persist. Workers in health care, public services and high-risk sectors face daily risks. A strong system must invest in prevention, not just respond after injuries occur.

### **French spoken**

Monsieur le Président, ce projet de loi affaiblit également la prévention. Chaque dollar retiré du système est un dollar qui ne peut pas être investi dans des milieux de travail plus sécuritaires, une application plus rigoureuse des règles et un meilleur soutien pour travailleurs blessés.

Nous connaissons la réalité. Les inspecteurs émettent des milliers d'ordres chaque année parce que les conditions dangereuses persistent. Les travailleurs des soins de santé, des services publics et d'autres secteurs à risque élevé font face à des risques quotidiens. Un système solide doit investir dans la prévention, et non seulement réagir après coup.

### **Translation**

*This bill also undermines prevention. Every dollar taken out of the system is a dollar that cannot be invested in safer workplaces, stricter enforcement of the rules and better support for injured workers.*

*We know the reality. Inspectors issue thousands of orders every year because hazardous conditions persist. Workers in health care, public services and other high-risk sectors face daily risks. A robust system must invest in prevention, not just react after the fact.*

### **English**

Honourable Speaker, we must also consider the real-life impact when a health-care aide is injured lifting a patient or when a transit operator experiences violence on the job. They depend on a system that will be there not just today but years into the future. Bill 228 forces reserves down in—down at exactly the moment they may be most needed. It ties the hand of the board and increases the likelihood of future premium spikes when conditions change, hurting the very businesses it claims to support.

Honourable Speaker, we cannot separate this bill from the record of the members opposite, because Manitobans have already lived through what happens when they are in charge. For seven and a half years under the Pallister-Stefanson government, we saw cuts, closures and deliberate weakening of the systems that protect workers. That record was not about efficiency, it was about austerity. And Manitobans are still paying the price.

They cut workplace safety funding. They reduced enforcement and capacity. They eliminated advisory bodies that gave workers and experts a voice. Thousands of public service jobs were cut, including inspectors and compliance officers. And what happened? Injuries went up. Risks increased. Workers were left more exposed. That is their legacy: cut first, deal with the consequences later.

**French spoken**

Monsieur le Président, ils ont réduit le financement de la sécurité au travail. Ils ont diminué la capacité d'application des règles. Ils ont éliminé des organismes consultatifs qui donnaient une voix aux travailleurs et aux experts. Des milliers de postes dans la fonction publique ont été supprimés, y compris des inspecteurs et des agents de conformité.

Et qu'est-ce qui est arrivé ? Les blessures ont augmenté. Les risques sont accrus. Les travailleurs ont été laissés plus vulnérables. Voilà leur héritage : couper d'abord, gérer les conséquences plus tard.

**Translation**

*They cut funding for workplace safety. They weakened the capacity to enforce the rules. They abolished advisory bodies that gave a voice to workers and experts. Thousands of public-sector jobs have been cut, including inspectors and compliance officers.*

*And what happened? The number of injuries went up. Risks increased. Workers were left more vulnerable. That is their legacy: cut first, deal with the consequences later.*

**English**

Honourable Speaker, their treatment of workers extended beyond policy into labour relations. During the MPI strike, they prolonged the dispute and left workers and families in limbo. During the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries strike, they escalated tensions instead of resolving them. Those were not isolated incidents. They were part of a pattern of disrespect towards working people.

\* (10:40)

They opposed the Manitoba jobs agreement. They underfunded teacher pensions. They froze wages and cut services. Time and again, they chose ideology over evidence. And now, with Bill 228, they want us to believe they are standing up for employers. But Manitobans know better. This is the same playbook: take a stable system, strip away its safeguards and hope nothing goes wrong. It did not work then and it will not work now.

Honourable Speaker, our government has taken a different approach. We are rebuilding what was damaged and restoring stability across the systems Manitobans depend on. In health care, we large—we launched the largest recruitment effort in Manitoba's history, adding thousands of new professionals, including hundreds of doctors and nurses. We are investing heavily in infrastructure, new emergency rooms, expanded surgical capacity and a new CancerCare headquarters.

**French spoken**

Monsieur le Président, notre gouvernement a choisi une approche différente. Nous reconstruisons ce qui a été endommagé et nous re-établissons la stabilité dans les systèmes dont dépendent les Manitobains. Dans le domaine de la santé, nous avons lancé le plus important effort de recrutement de notre histoire, ajoutant des milliers de professionnels, dont des centaines de médecins et d'infirmières. Nous 'investons' donc massivement dans des infrastructures, de nouvelles salles d'urgence, une capacité chirurgicale accrue et un nouveau siège pour le CancerCare.

**Translation**

*Our government has taken a different approach. We are rebuilding what has been damaged and restoring stability to the systems on which Manitobans depend. In the health sector, we have launched the largest recruitment drive in our history, bringing in thousands of health-care professionals, including hundreds of doctors and nurses. We are investing heavily in infrastructure, new ERs, increased surgical capacity and a new headquarters for CancerCare.*

**English**

We are almost—also making life more affordable. We made this—gas tax cut permanent. We froze hydro 'wates.' We increased tax credits for homeowners and renters. We expanded \$10-a-day child care and introduced a universal school nutrition program. These are real investments that support families and strengthen the economy.

At the same time, we are strengthening workplace safety. We have updated legislation, increased penalties, expanded protections—including psychological safety—and ensured strong enforcement throughout thousands of inspections every year. We are investing in prevention because we know safer workplaces reduce costs and lives.

Honourable Speaker, we have also maintained balance in the workers' compensation system. They have—keep premiums low, ensured stability and supported employers, while still returning surplus funds when it is responsible to do so. That is the difference. That is the difference between careful stewardship and political shortcuts.

### ***French spoken***

Monsieur le Président, nous avons également maintenu l'équilibre du régime d'indemnisation des travailleurs. Nous travaillons de garder les primes basses, assurer la stabilité, et soutenir des employeurs, tout en retournant les surplus de manière responsable, lorsque les conditions les permettent. C'est ça, la différence entre une gestion prudente et des raccourcis politiques.

### ***Translation***

*We have also maintained the balance of the workers' compensation system. We are working to keep premiums low, ensure stability and support employers, whilst returning surpluses in a responsible manner when conditions allow. That is the difference between prudent management and political shortcuts.*

### ***English***

Honourable Speaker, Bill 228 asks us to go backwards. It asks us to weaken prevention, increase risk and destabilize a system that is working.

After seven and a half years of cuts and chaos under the Pallister-Stefanson governments, Manitobans did not ask for more of the same. They asked for stability, they asked for responsibility and they asked for governments that put people first. We should not repeat the mistakes of the past. We should not gamble with a system that workers and employers depend on. We should protect what works, strengthen prevention and ensure long-term stability.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Portage la Prairie.

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** –228, an amendment to The Workers Compensation Act, brought

forward by my colleague from Roblin. This is a thoughtful and practical and principled piece of legislation, one that reflects our commitment as Progressive Conservatives to fairness, accountability and sound financial management.

At its core, this bill is about balance. It's about balancing fiscal responsibility with fairness, balancing the needs of injured workers with realities faced by employees and ensuring that Manitoba's workers' compensation system remains stable, sustainable and transparent for the long term.

I do want to talk about some challenges that businesses have faced under this NDP government. Rising costs, rising property tax—some of the highest in Canada, the highest increases we've seen—gutting regulatory accountability legislation and growing more and more red tape, the Manitoba jobs agreement.

And just for the information of people that are watching and listening today and so this can be put on the record, the Portage hospital that was built, if the Manitoba jobs agreement was in place at that, that would be another 3 and a half million dollars for Manitobans to pay for that hospital—or, to put that into perspective, a mobile MRI.

Nothing to address the punitive payroll tax, moving the apprenticeship ratios from two to one, to one to one, which limits the number of apprentices being trained and creates an additional challenge for businesses already dealing with challenging labour market; excluding Manitoba small businesses from only—the only half-baked, paltry affordability measure in this budget; awarding a \$36-million contract to an American company and displacing a Manitoba company that has been here for years and years.

Business exits have outpaced new business starts for six consecutive quarters. Businesses are voting with their feet. They can't get out of here fast enough under this NDP government. Not only has this government failed to provide meaningful cost relief for Manitoba businesses, they have actually made it harder for them to operate. Supporting this legislation that businesses are asking for would be one thing this government could do to signal its support for small businesses and send the message that they are actually listening.

Thank you so much, Honourable Speaker.

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Really a pleasure to rise in the House once again to point out the reckless and unthoughtful approach by the former—by the

opposition, by the former government. Because we don't have to look very far to see the damage that they did specifically to WCB and to the safety of workers than to just look at their record under Heather Stefanson and Brian Pallister.

But I did want to just note, you know, once again, here, you have a reckless approach by members that builds on the reckless approach that they continue to take every single day in opposition, highlighted, I think most egregiously, by the \$1-billion plan to give money to their rich friends, to benefit the rich in our province.

I mean, like, there's nothing new under the sun and Tories can't seem to get out of their own way, but to not only leave this Province with a \$2-billion debt from their time in office but now to suggest, well, actually, we would add to that debt, we would add to that burden that the average Manitoban would pay by adding \$1 billion to the books, I mean, maybe it would just be—come from cuts. Maybe it would go to the deficit. I don't think they've figured this out. But it just highlights that anything that they say now—any policy, program, idea that they have—has to be seen through the lens of that \$1-billion mistake that they made in promising to their billion—their millionaire friends.

But, again, it really is—it highlights how disorganized and how thoughtless they are as an opposition. And I say that because it's important to have a strong opposition. It's important to have an opposition that actually wants to see the province get better and, you know, take account for the mistakes that they made while they were in office, be straight up with Manitobans. They haven't done that in a number of ways. I know we could spend the whole rest of my time talking about that.

\* (10:50)

But just specifically when it comes to worker safety, when it comes to workers' compensation and worker safety in our province, you know, this was an issue that, under Gary Doer—now we're talking, what is that, 27 years ago—Manitobans were—the darkness was lifted from this province and we got rid of—finally got rid of Gary Filmon and we finally came into the light and came into a period of prosperity in this province that was unprecedented.

But when Gary Doer came in, he comes in—and I remember this. I mean, I was a young man at the time, but I remember, and they said, oh, the union boss here, he's going to be our premier; the sky is falling. And what does Gary do? The—one of his first things,

he says, we're going to protect workers—we're going to protect workers. And the opposition at that time lost their minds—lost their minds. They blew up their caucus. The sky is falling, they said. They said it's going to drive the province into economic doom and there's no possible way that we can protect workers in this province.

And, you know, it just so happens that protecting workers is not only the right thing to do but it actually benefits the economy and benefits all Manitobans. It's—Gary Doer, believe it or not, had that one Manitoba vision even before we started talking about it, right? And he brought employers along.

And, of course, what happened to the official opposition at that time? The history was dark. They haven't seen anything yet, Honourable Speaker, because if they think that that early 2000s was bad, it's going to get real bad for these folks going forward.

But I tell this story because it highlights that it was the same attitude then: the sky's falling, we can't protect workers, we can't step up to ensure that we have safe workplaces, everything's going to fall apart. It became, though, a non-partisan issue.

Like, where we're starting from right now is where Gary Doer left us 27 years ago, right? He said, look, we protect workers, we fully fund WCB, we add that stability, we work in partnership with business, we work in partnership with industry, we bring management to the table at all opportunities and we give stability, the kind of stability that these guys don't get, Honourable Speaker, but business respects and understands. They want that stability. And we gave that stability under Gary Doer.

Then what happens? Well, these guys get into office, they take government, and they go right after WCB. They see it as their own piggy bank, right? They say, well, we're going to—you know, and it's not me saying this, the auditor said this, said, these guys were reckless with WCB at that time, completely out of control, because they wanted that money for themselves. I get it. That's their—that's exactly where their—*[interjection]* You know, I'm not going to get sidetracked, because members—again, members opposite, go back and read the Hansard.

The member's argument right now is, like, literally the exact same argument from 2001. And I think she should maybe give Stuart Murray a call and just say, hey, buddy, was that a good move or not? Oh, wait a minute, Stuart Murray, maybe we can do better. So, again, why I say all of this is because what

we've provided for workers is the base. That's now the base, that kind of stability in terms of their workplace safety as being a priority.

But then more—even as importantly, we have said to employers that we're going to work in a steady way with them. We're going to ensure that the ratio that's been established is one that's—you know, it deals with the risk inherent in offering insurance, the kind of insurance that WCB offers, but that it is also fair and it's transparent. And again, that's something that members opposite couldn't do.

Now, they had—they actually were in government when we saw some of the most volatility that the global economy has ever seen, right? So they were in government during that time. And you would think that if they had that opportunity during that time to support small businesses, to stabilize the economy, would they have done that?

Well, they didn't, Honourable Speaker. They didn't pull any of the levers. They kept accumulating the money in their own coffers. And then when desperate times came, what did they do? They recklessly spent it and they left us with \$2 billion of debt. That's their record. Businesses want stability. When you talk about Trump—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —and the impact to the economy right now, businesses want a government that's responsible, that stands up for Manitoba, that stands up for our interests, but doesn't do things like offer a billion dollars to their rich friends and doesn't suggest that we put WCB in a precarious position.

And employers want to be part of this solution. Again, that's how much the conversation has changed, has moved. And it's moved right past these members opposite. They don't understand how important it is to have workers that are safe, that are supported, and that are part of the solution. Because employers get it, and that's why they support us and that's why these guys will be in opposition for—forever.

Now, there's lots to say. I do think that, you know, when we're talking about the actual impact here, we're talking about less than 1 per cent of payroll that supports WCB.

This is the kind of reasonable and stable kind of predictable funding model that I think businesses appreciate. But it really does show that these guys are willing to destabilize our public institutions. They want to prioritize those quick payouts for their friends

while they jeopardize that long-term stability that Manitobans are asking for.

And Manitobans have seen where that approach leads. We've seen it. It's not, like, a theoretical, I wonder what would happen. When that instability happened, when the former premier Brian Pallister went to war with working people in this province, we saw our economy slow, we saw our businesses leaving. You know, these guys, they never even—we said, well, let's cut the payroll tax. These guys, they voted against it, Honourable Speaker. Like, it's crazy. It is so upside down. These guys don't know where they're headed. And it's, I think, quite frankly, embarrassing for the business community to have these guys as their supposed champions here in this place.

It's where they undermine public systems simply for the sake of ideology, not for good policy that Manitobans shake their heads. So it's going to be a long time on those benches, guys. And I think members opposite should get used to this, you know. And there's only one way out, and that's to show accountability, to start bringing forward real serious policy, and—

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

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** This has been an informative debate this morning.

You know, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) just put some great words on the record. The Minister of Labour put some really strong words on the record earlier. And what was really informative to me was, you know, as the Minister of Justice spoke about the importance of working in collaboration with all Manitobans, with business owners, small business, bigger business, with the workers, the thing that I noticed was the uproar. And it's in the name, Workers Compensation Board. But the uproar and almost disgust when he even said the word, workers, they work—they lost their mind. They were heckling, they were going wild.

And so I don't understand this disdain for the people who are working and powering our economy here; the average Manitoban that we're here, sent here to work for.

You know, and I appreciate this opportunity to get up and speak about some of this work that we're doing in government. You know, we've done a whole bunch of things that, unfortunately—I've talked to constituents about this, by the way, and they're baffled—that members opposite have voted against. They voted

against it. We tried to—actually, we did, because we're in government, so we've got a majority, so we got it done.

But it doesn't matter. They said, no, anyway. We got rid of—or lowered the income, the payroll tax, for small businesses here in Manitoba, making a huge difference. We got rid of PST on manufacturing equipment. We—last month, we brought 11,000 new jobs in Manitoba. That was the most in Canada last month. And when we bring that up, they heckle. They bring up CFIB, who gave us an A- on their last scorecard.

So, look, Bill 228, it replaces the Workers Compensation Board's current evidence-based policy, which targets a 130 per cent funding ratio for stability, with a rigid trigger that prioritizes quick rebates, risking premium volatility and reducing the board's ability to invest in preventing programs.

It should also be noted here that Manitoba currently has the lowest average assessment rates in Canada. It's 95 cents per hundred dollars of payroll, because WCB manages reserves prudently and returns surpluses when conditions allow.

And listen, you know, we've heard—again, I mentioned this yesterday in the Chamber, I think that we've heard—

\* (11:00)

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The hour is now 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions. The resolution—

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

## RESOLUTIONS

### **Res. 8—Streamlining Business and Investment Attraction by Establishing a Single-Desk Investment Office**

**The Speaker:** The resolution before us this morning is resolution—*[interjection]*

Order, please. I'd just remind all members that the Speaker is standing and needs to be heard in silence.

So the resolution before us this morning is resolution No. 8, Streamlining Business Permitting and Investment Attraction by Establishing a Single-Desk Investment Office, brought forward by the honourable member for Lakeside.

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** I move, seconded by the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth),

*WHEREAS Manitoba lags behind other provinces due to key factors such as overly stringent government regulations, lengthy processing times, and poor communication; and*

*WHEREAS the elimination of the delays caused by these regulations is essential for Manitoba's economic growth; and*

*WHEREAS Manitoba possesses significant untapped potential to attract foreign and extraprovincial investment, particularly in high-growth sectors such as advanced manufacturing, value added and agri-food processing, resource development, clean technology, and transportation logistics; and*

*WHEREAS entrepreneurs and investors regularly encounter complex, inconsistent, and duplicative processes when navigating Manitoba's provincial and municipal regulatory systems, including permitting, zoning, and infrastructure access; and*

*WHEREAS the absence of a centralized, business- and investor-friendly entry point in Manitoba creates unnecessary barriers and inefficiencies that deter entrepreneurship and investment, and delay economic development projects; and*

*WHEREAS other jurisdictions across Canada have implemented investor concierge-style services and investment facilitation offices to reduce red tape, streamline approvals, and coordinate regulatory navigation for out-of-province and foreign investors; and*

*WHEREAS such an office would also support investors in identifying and applying for relevant provincial and municipal grants, incentives, and supports; and*

*WHEREAS Manitoba would benefit from a similar model through the establishment of a Single-Desk Investment Office (Office) to act as a nexus for businesses of all kinds and a dedicated liaison for prospective investors; and*

*WHEREAS this Office would help streamline the approvals process by replacing complex and cumbersome provincial and municipal regulatory systems with a single entity where businesses, entrepreneurs, and investors could pull any provincial permit, receive in-person information about permits, pay fees, receive clear timelines, and obtain timely approvals; and*

*WHEREAS such an Office could also help provide clearer communication, facilitate site selection and hydro hookups, and help investors connect with both public and private sector partners for land acquisition and leasing and any other permitting-related services.*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to expedite the creation of a centralized single-desk investment office to facilitate a timely, clear and streamlined approvals process for entrepreneurs, businesses and others who want to invest in growing Manitoba's economy.

***Motion presented.***

**Mr. King:** I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this very important resolution to streamline how businesses and investors navigate government processes through the creation of a single-desk investment office. This proposal is focused on economic growth and affordability. It is focused on making Manitoba a place where businesses can invest with confidence, grow and create jobs.

Manitobans are feeling the pressure of rising costs every day. Affordability depends on strong economic growth, stable employment and rising incomes. When the economy slows, opportunities shrink and costs continue to rise. The most effective way to improve affordability over the long term is to grow the economy and increase private-sector investment.

Right now, the conditions for that growth are not where they need to be. Businesses across Manitoba are navigating a system that is complex, fragmented and difficult to move through. There are multiple departments, multiple points of contact and often unclear timelines. That environment creates delays, increased costs and introduces uncertainty into every investment decision.

Those costs do not disappear. They are carried through projects and passed on through the economy. They show up in higher prices, reduced investment and fewer jobs.

The data reflects this reality. Private capital investment growth in Manitoba has fallen from 11.3 per cent to a projected 1.2 per cent. Employment growth has dropped from 2.7 per cent to a projected 0.9 per cent. Real GDP growth has declined from 2.8 per cent to 1.3 per cent. These are clear indicators of a slowing economy and a loss of momentum.

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

Businesses are responding to that environment in predictable ways. They are delaying decisions, they are scaling back investment and, in many cases, they're choosing to invest in other provinces where the path forward is clearer and more predictable.

Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses confirmed that, in their latest report card, Manitoba received an overall score of 4.1 out of 10 and a grade of F. Regulatory accountability scored 3.0, also an F. Political priority on red tape reduction scored 1.0, another F. These are failing marks across the board. Manitobans should take note that that's a lot of F in failures.

But not to worry. You know, when I had a report card like that, my mom and dad would send me back to school. I'm sure Manitobans will send this NDP government back to opposition in the very near future.

Those numbers reflect the experience of business on the ground. Productivity has also declined sharply under this government, and that has direct consequences for wages, investment and overall economic performance. Manitoba already ranks in the lower tier of provinces for productivity and the gap continues to widen, with output per worker tens of thousands of dollars lower than provinces like Saskatchewan and Alberta. Productivity growth in Manitoba is now less than half the national average, which signals that the economy is not generating the same value per worker as competing jurisdictions. That matters because productivity is the foundation of rising wages. When businesses are more productive, they can pay higher wages, expand their operations and reinvest in new projects.

Strong productivity growth also helps combat inflation by increasing the supply and efficiency of goods and services, which reduces cost pressures across the economy. It ensures that when wages rise, they translate into real increases in purchasing power, rather than simply keeping pace with rising costs. Investors look closely at productivity because it reflects efficiency, cost competitiveness and long-term potential. Declining productivity sends a clear signal that Manitoba is becoming a less attractive place to invest, which reinforces the broader trend of slowing capital investment and weaker economic growth.

Honourable Speaker, Manitoba did not always find itself in this position. Under the previous PC government, there was a clear and structured approach to reducing red tape. The Regulatory Accountability Committee provided oversight at the Cabinet level.

The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act eliminated hundreds of unnecessary regulatory requirements and streamlined processes across government. Manitoba was recognized as a leader in regulatory accountability.

That work provided real benefits. It reduced duplication. It improved co-ordination. It made it easier for businesses to operate and invest.

That progress has been undone. The NDP eliminated the Regulatory Accountability Committee. The framework that measured and controlled regulatory burden no longer exists. There is no centralized accountability for red tape. Departments are operating in silos. The result is an increase in duplication, delays and uncertainty. The CFIB has stated clearly that Manitoba has backtracked on red tape reduction. The data shows that regulatory burden has increased significantly, with businesses now facing roughly double the red tape and regulatory requirements compared to where the province had been trending under the previous system.

Honourable Speaker, businesses are making rational decisions in response to these conditions. When faced with uncertainty, unclear times and increasing regulatory burden, it makes sense to pause. It makes sense to hold on to capital and wait for a more stable and predictable environment. These are not decisions that are made lightly. They reflect the reality of operating in a system that does not provide the certainty required for investment.

Manitoba is competing with other provinces for that investment. Saskatchewan and Alberta are seeing stronger growth in capital investment and economic activity. They are providing clearer processes and faster timelines. Investors are responding to those conditions. Manitoba has the potential to compete. The province has strong sectors, a skilled workforce, a significant opportunity for growth. The challenge is not a lack of potential. The challenge is the system that surrounds that potential.

This resolution addresses that challenge. A single-desk investment office would provide a co-ordinated entry point for businesses and investors. It would allow them to access information, understand requirements and receive clear timelines in one place. It would improve communication across departments and reduce duplication. It would give businesses the certainty they need to move forward. This approach aligns with what other provinces are already doing. It reflects best practices in investment, attraction and

economic development. It is a proven model that improves efficiency and supports growth.

This resolution respects the role of rural municipalities and planning districts. Their authority remains unchanged. Local decision making stays exactly where it belongs. The focus is on helping investors navigate the system more effectively and ensuring that processes are co-ordinated. The outcome is very straightforward. Projects move forward more quickly. Costs are reduced. Investment increases and jobs are created. Economic growth strengthens. Affordability improves.

Honourable Speaker, this is a practical solution to a real problem. It is grounded in the experience of Manitoba businesses and supported by clear economic data. It recognizes the need for growth and provides a path to achieve it.

\* (11:10)

Manitoba cannot afford to continue losing investment to other provinces. It cannot afford to allow uncertainty and complexity to hold back growth. It cannot afford to see affordability challenges deepen as economic momentum slows. This resolution takes a clear step in the right direction, honourable Deputy Speaker. It supports businesses. It supports investment. It supports job creation. And it supports affordability, most importantly for Manitobans.

I encourage all members of this House to support this common sense resolution.

### Questions

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

The floor is open for questions.

**Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism):** The members opposite say they want to make Manitoba more competitive. But under their government, businesses face cuts, uncertainty and a lack of leadership.

Why do the PCs think another office will solve problems that were created by their own failure to govern?



**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** I want to thank the member for Assiniboia for that question. And I don't think she was listening very well to my preamble to this resolution.

The NDP dismantled what we had for reducing red tape and bureaucracy. The PCs in the previous administration had put those in place to make it easier for businesses and investors to come to Manitoba and set up shop and grow our economy. So I think maybe—should go back and read maybe the Hansard that—from the comments that I previously made.

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** I'd like to thank the great member for Lakeside for bringing forward such a well-thought-out and structured resolution before us today.

And since the NDP government has completely diminished any hope for entrepreneurial spirit in Manitoba, can the member speak to the importance of creating the right conditions for economic growth in our great province?

**Mr. King:** I want to thank the member for La Vérendrye for that important question and for his support with this resolution. I know he's passionate about economic development here in our province and advocates quite deeply for his constituents in all the province.

But economic growth here in—is the foundation for affordability because it creates jobs, it raises incomes, it expands opportunity. When government creates those conditions, investment flows and businesses can grow, which puts more money in people's pockets. When those conditions are not there, growth slows and costs continue to rise without relief.

And Manitobans, honourable Deputy Speaker, are feeling that pressure today. This resolution is about fixing the system so the economy can grow and affordability can improve in a real and lasting way.

**MLA Kennedy:** I can assure the member opposite that I was listening to the preamble. It just doesn't make it so just because you say it.

The former PC government had seven and a half years to improve permitting, support investment and cut red tape. Instead, they left businesses frustrated, abandoned major projects and stalled economic growth.

Why should Manitobans trust the PCs on economic develop now when they failed to deliver when they had the chance to?

**Mr. King:** I thank the member for the question and the comment.

And we did the work. We did the work to reduce red tape and cut the bureaucracy, tried to get government out of the way of investors coming to this province to set up shop, to grow our economy. We did the work. The N-D-B-P government has torn it apart.

**Mr. Narth:** This is something that I'm passionate about because I hear it each and every day in my constituency. Unfortunately, I hear of great businesses that are a great asset not only to their local communities but to the greater good of the economy of our province—they're leaving. They're leaving our province to go to areas that are more open and accommodating to business.

So I'd ask the member: Why is it important that government processes be clear, efficient and predictable for both government, businesses and the investors?

**Mr. King:** I thank my colleague from La Vérendrye once again for a great question.

When government processes are slow and unpredictable, they drive up costs for businesses. Those costs are passed on to Manitobans, and it's part of what is making life more expensive today. Now, clear and efficient processes reduce delays. They lower cross-costs across the economy. Leads to more investment, more jobs, more stable prices, and this is a practical way to address inflation by tackling the cost pressures at their source.

So all of these bureaucracy and red tape that they have to go through costs investors and businesses time and money, which could be more well spent in either expanding their operations or giving higher wages to their employees. So, again—

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

**MLA Kennedy:** Our government has already created more than 25,000 new full-time jobs in Manitoba since taking office—[interjection]—yes, thank you—and that includes almost 11,000 within the month of March. That's just incredible growth within our province.

My question from the—for the member opposite is, if their approach was so effective, why did Manitoba see years of cuts, stalled growth and communities being left behind under the PCs?

**Mr. King:** You know, the NDP government can talk all they want about the jobs that they've created. But, honourable Speaker, those are public-sector jobs. We want to create private-sector jobs to create our economy, to grow our economy. *[interjection]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. King:** Now, honourable Speaker, can you tell me the difference between private-sector jobs and public-sector jobs? Who pays for public-sector jobs? *[interjection]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. King:** The Manitoba taxpayer. So we can't continue to rely on public-sector employment in this province to grow our economy and make life more affordable for people in this province. We need to create private-sector environment and businesses and attract them.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Spruce Woods—the—sorry—*[interjection]*

Order.

The honourable member for Spruce Woods.

**Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods):** Well, I'd just like to thank the member of Lakeside because this resolution is absolutely wonderful to get our economy going and help with affordability.

So can the member explain how economic growth connects directly to the affordability for Manitoba families?

**Mr. King:** I want to thank the member from Souris for the very important question that she just posed to me.

Affordability for Manitobans, it's something that we're facing, is a crisis and our—the NDP government needs to wake up from whatever fantasy dream they're in, thinking that they're making the economy better, wake up to the reality of the nightmare that Manitobans are facing during—*[interjection]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. King:** —these tough economic times.

Affordability improves when people have access to good jobs and rising wages. That only happens with a growing economy. Without growth, families are left trying to keep up with rising costs without the income to match. Delays in approvals and investment make

that problem worse by slowing job creation here in this province.

This resolution focuses—

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

**MLA Kennedy:** Honourable Deputy Speaker, the only nightmare that happened for Manitobans was when the PC government was in power for seven and a half years. It's a new day in Manitoba.

When Manitobans drive past a construction site, they should see Manitoba licence plates in the parking lot and Manitoba job—workers on the job. Why did the previous PC government allow so many jobs and economic benefits to leave the province instead of supporting local workers?

\* (11:20)

**Mr. King:** As I had mentioned in my previous answer to the member across, those are public-sector jobs, a number of what she's talking about—which is great; we appreciate those jobs. But, again, those are on the backs of the taxpayers of Manitoba. We need to create private-sector employment here in this province.

Now, I've—*[interjection]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. King:** —heard from a number of my Lakeside constituent businesses, and I'll name them: MoveMobility, one that the minister across the way will not respond to after seven months of them sending a letter to speak to him about an expansion and an opportunity in CentrePort, and Yakta, Arrowquip, all of these—

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

**Mr. Narth:** It's clear that this NDP government is only working hard to protect their tax-and-spend socialist approach to the management of our province.

So I'd like to ask the member, what role does government play in either supporting or holding back investment in our province?

**Mr. King:** I want to thank my colleague, who seconded this resolution, for that very important question.

And, I mean, we feel that government needs to get out of the way in ways that investors can come into our province and have a single desk that they can go to and get the guidance that they need for approvals and permits.

Government has a direct impact on whether investment comes to Manitoba or goes somewhere else. When processes are slow and fragmented, they increase costs and uncertainty, which holds back economic growth, honourable Deputy Speaker. That lack of growth contributes to affordability challenges, because there are fewer jobs, less upward pressure wages. When government gets it right, investment increases and the economy most definitely expands—

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

Time for questions has expired.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Deputy Speaker:** But before we move on to debate, I'd like to direct all honourable members to the public gallery. We have seated in the public gallery from Henry G. Izatt Middle School 30 grade 6 students under the direction of Tanya Pfefferle. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan).

### Debate

**The Deputy Speaker:** The floor is now open for debate.

**MLA Jennifer Chen (Fort Richmond):** Honourable Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this bill and to contribute to a discussion that goes to the heart of Manitoba's economy. Because when we talk about permitting approvals and investment attraction, we are really talking about how projects move from idea to reality and how quickly Manitobans begin to see the benefits.

Ultimately, this is about whether businesses can invest with confidence, whether timelines are clear and whether projects move forward without unnecessary delay. Honourable Deputy Speaker, I think we can all agree that Manitoba should be a place where businesses can navigate the approvals process efficiently, where permitting timelines are predictable and where investment leads to real, timely outcomes.

This bill raises concerns about co-ordination, permitting timelines and the experience of businesses working through the system, and these are important considerations. Because in practical terms, businesses are not asking for complexity; they are asking for clarity. They are asking for predictability and they asking for decisions.

When a business enters the permitting process, they want to know three things. How long will this

take? Who is accountable? And when can we get started? That is what this conversation comes down to, and it is exactly the lens our government is using in its approach to economic development. Because improving the investment climate is not just about structure, it is about outcomes. It is about ensuring that approvals lead to construction, that investment leads to jobs and that growth is felt in communities across Manitoba.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, since forming government, we have focused on making sure that projects move forward and that businesses have the confidence to invest. We have created nearly 13,000 new full-time jobs in Manitoba.

That reflects projects advancing, businesses expanding and investment, translating into real opportunities for Manitobans. Simply put, those jobs exist because work is happening, not because projects are sitting in process.

We have also taken direct steps to support businesses. By increasing the payroll tax exemption threshold, we have enabled more Manitoba businesses to hire, grow and reinvest. That is how you strengthen the environment in which businesses operate.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we are also making record capital investments, building schools, hospitals, personal-care homes and highways across our province. And that is directly connected to the permitting and approvals conversation, because when approvals processes function efficiently, projects move to construction faster. When projects move faster, workers get on site sooner. And when that happens, local businesses, from suppliers to contractors, see real opportunities. This is about turning approvals into action. This is about ensuring that investment is not delayed, but delivered.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, businesses are not looking for more layers; they are looking for results. They are looking for a system that is co-ordinated, responsive and focused on delivering timely decisions. The focus cannot only be on identifying a single entry point. It must also be how decisions are made across the system and how efficiently those decisions are delivered. That is where real progress happens, and that is where our government's focus remains.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we are also ensuring that when investment comes into Manitoba, it creates benefits here at home. Through Manitoba jobs agreement, we are prioritizing Manitoba workers on major projects. Because when projects approved and moved

forward, Manitobans should be the ones build them. That means good jobs, fair wages and a stable workforce that businesses can rely on to complete projects on time and on budget. And that stability matters, not just for workers, but for investors and project proponents as well.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, when we talk about the approvals process, we should also recognize that real impact delays can have. For small-business owners waiting on the permit, delays are not just administrative; they can mean postponed hiring, increased costs and uncertainty about the future. That is why efficiency, co-ordination and the clear timelines matter so much, and that is why this conversation must always stay focused on outcomes.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we are already seeing growing confidence in Manitoba as a place to invest. There have been significant investments in advanced manufacturing, agri-food innovation and clean technology. These investments reflect a broader reality. Businesses see opportunity in Manitoba. They see a province where there is a skilled workforce, where infrastructure is being built and where projects are moving forward. And again, this comes back to the core of today's discussion: how we ensure that the path for—the path from approval to construction is efficient and reliable.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we are also supporting major projects that will deliver long-term economic growth. The Lynn Lake Gold Project is expected to create hundreds of construction jobs and hundreds of permanent jobs. This is what it looks like when investment turns into action, when approvals translate into real economic activity.

We're also supporting the development of the First Nations-owned mine in Manitoba, ensuring that growth is inclusive and that communities directly benefit from development.

\* (11:30)

And when we talk about long-term opportunity, we must also look to Churchill. Churchill represents one of Manitoba's greatest economic assets and a significant opportunity for trade and northern development.

Our government is working with Indigenous partners, northern communities and industry to strengthen this corridor and expand opportunities in shipping, mining, tourism and logistics. This is about unlocking potential but, more importantly, it is about

ensuring that projects move forward in a way that delivers lasting benefits.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, throughout this discussion, it is important that we remain focused on what truly matters. This is not simply about how systems are structured. It is about how effectively they function. It is about how efficiently businesses can move through the approvals process. And it is about whether investment leads to jobs, growth and stronger communities.

Because Manitobans are not looking for more layers, they're looking for a system that delivers. They're looking for projects that move forward. They're looking for opportunities close to home. And they're looking for a government that is focused on results.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, our government will continue to focus on exactly that: improving co-ordination, supporting businesses, advancing projects and ensuring that investment translates into real benefits for Manitobans.

Because, ultimately, this comes back to a simple question. How do we move projects forward in Manitoba in a way that is timely, effective and beneficial for our economy and our people? That is the work we are doing. That is the focus of our government. And that is what Manitobans expect from all of us in this House.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** This resolution comes from a place of consultation with Manitobans, with not only businesses across our province but those that work for these businesses that their families rely on, on the good, stable jobs that proud Manitoba entrepreneurs are able to provide.

You know, these are businesses that start as a backyard mom-and-pop shop and turn into the world-recognized employers that we have been so proud to host in our great province. I've brought this up both in Estimates as well as in my question in question period, but, you know, we've got so many great world-recognized businesses that have started in Manitoba, started as small businesses—started as small businesses that didn't know how to run a business other than by providing their great idea.

They—these are people that saw opportunity and were proud to build and grow and flourish that opportunity in the province that they call home. That was at a time when there was less regulatory burden

and more opportunity for businesses to bring their ideas to the customers, whether those customers be down the street from their home or across the world.

We've had a slippery slope of additional regulation and red tape restricting the ease of entry into the business community. And our previous government had made strides in breaking down that regulatory process and the duplication of red tape.

Since then, unfortunately, we've seen the NDP government take office. And I'm not sure exactly what it is, if they've got a regulatory quota in each department or they've got some sort of regulation factory that runs down in one of their offices, but they've been doing a great job at setting up an array of conflicting regulations that are creating an additional burden on businesses from starting up.

So this resolution is an answer to the desperation of not only the business community—and I need to focus on that: it's not only the business community, but it's the employees of these companies.

You know, when I brought forward the example to the minister of NPI out in Blumenort, Manitoba, now a world-recognized, value-added commodity processor, it was their employees that had first reached out to me, saying that there's their jobs and the—their future with the company that's at stake, dependent on approvals. And then they were the ones that brought me in contact with the owner of that company.

And I think that's an—just one example but a prime example of how this affects not only the businesses—because we know that there's an anti-business attitude from the NDP government, and every time we talk about business, they claim to—by creating a wedge, claim to be representing the working class. But, in fact, the working class in Manitoba is largely—and by largely, I mean 90 per cent plus—dependent on small business and entrepreneurs in our province.

So unless, you know, the NDP government one day finds the pot of gold or the money tree, it's not realistic that you're going to have all employees being employed by the social system and the government. You know, I guess in their dream world, it would be pure socialism and everyone may be employed by the government, but that's just not reality. And, unfortunately, right now, we need to represent what is realistic in our province.

So this resolution is our limited ability as opposition to bring forward the voices of Manitobans, the voices of companies like MoveMobility in Lakeside,

like Arrowquip in Lakeside, NPI in my corner of the province, as well as companies like Law-Marot, a world-recognized, Quebec-based agriculture processing equipment company that has looked to Manitoba as a logical manufacturing hub for the entire—not only the entire country but their delivery of product around the world.

Unfortunately, these are examples of companies that are struggling under the regulatory burden and convoluted silo system of approvals of those regulations that exist within the government. We're hearing each and every day companies that are saying, you know, we never saw that any laws have changed, we haven't heard in the news, we haven't got any letters of notice that things are changing. When we go to reapply for our licence to run our business, it's an entirely new regulatory process that's being involved.

These are permits that used to take—they were a single point of contact that used to take a day of approval are now taking 30 days of approval. These are single-contact permits that used to take 30 days are now involving three different departments and are now taking half a year.

These are real-life examples that I think may be slipping through the fingers of the ministers without even them knowing because, you know, as we saw today, you have the majority of the government benches filled with ministers that should be out there making sure the efficiency of their departments, but, instead, in this House debating private members' business while the backbenchers are silenced.

\* (11:40)

So, you know, I think that just leads to the concern that, potentially, the addition to the regulatory burden that businesses and Manitobans are seeing in our province is due to the ministers being unaware of what's even going on within their departments, and that's concerning.

So this is a call that businesses and Manitobans deserve—the, you know, the—these are simple permits that are needed by someone who runs a home-based business, runs it part time. We should be encouraging that business growth without convoluting the system but, honourable Speaker, unfortunately we are seeing the exact opposite. And I could stand and speak for hours of example by example—cases of regulations that are further hindering the growth and development of our province. And the results are showing. Economists are speaking out. Businesses that are surveyed

are speaking out. The results are showing our economy is struggling.

It's one of—if not the worst performing economy in the entire country. I know the minister would argue that, but the statistics support it and economists are speaking out as well. Surveys by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business gives this government an F grade on the regulatory burden for businesses.

Businesses through surveys across our province are also speaking out that that is the largest barrier to growing or staying in our great province of Manitoba. And I think we owe it to all Manitobans to get out of the way and allow this great province to prosper.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before we continue with debate, I just want to direct all honourable members' attention to the public gallery where we have the second group from Henry G. Izatt Middle School. They are joining us from the constituency of Fort Whyte.

\* \* \*

**Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation):** I'm just really happy to have the opportunity to speak in the Chamber. It's a privilege for any person to get a chance to speak in the Chamber. It's an honour to speak on behalf of your constituents and speak to the people of Manitoba, so I'm pretty honoured to get a chance to do that. Not everyone does. There's a lucky few who get a chance to speak here, so I consider myself always very fortunate and honoured every time I get a chance to rise in this esteemed House.

Honourable Speaker, the resolution that's brought forward today by the MLA on the other side is one that is, you know, worth considering, both on its impact and what he's actually bringing, but also his intent. I think his intent is to strengthen our economy, which I think could be allotted. It could be thought as, yes, of course, we want to grow our economy. That's what I do every day in my office: find ways to work with businesses, small, medium, large businesses in Manitoba. Work with ways to break down the barriers that businesses might face, whether that's regulatory, whether that is trade barriers, whether that is helping them access more programming and funding, provincial programming, municipal. Or whether that's national and international opportunities to grow their businesses and help more Manitobans get good paying jobs right here in Manitoba.

But at the same time, we have to look at the actual substance of his bill—the resolution actually. And the resolution that he's putting forward today, quite frankly, I think misses the mark and is off base. And so what we're advocating for, honourable Speaker, is to grow an economy that works for all Manitobans.

And if you look at the proof that we have shown over the last two and a half years, well, I think we're on the right track. So my suggestion to members opposite is to get on board with our strategy that is clearly working, clearly putting ourselves as Manitobans and businesses, on a good footing nationally and internationally, and seeing the successes that we're having in our economy here so far.

First and foremost, honourable Deputy Speaker, I'll point to the fact that we created nearly 11,000 new jobs right here in Manitoba last month. That's a strong sign that what we're doing to build an economy, to get businesses excited, to get businesses to come here and work and invest, increase their employment, is working.

Now, what members opposite sometimes fail to recognize is not only did we create nearly 11,000 new jobs—net-new jobs here in Manitoba in one month but that that was ranking No.1 in the entire country. No.1 in job growth—No.1 in job growth. So when member opposite puts forward things on the record that says we're last in the country, that is completely off base. That is not based in a factual narrative. He's completely out to lunch. Now, I know it's not quite 12 o'clock yet, but apparently he's, you know, already on that path.

But, honourable Deputy Speaker, it's very clear that we're on a good economic footing; you just look at the results. Now in addition to the fact that we created nearly 11,000 net-new jobs, good paying jobs, in addition to the fact that we're No.1, first in the country, the leading area of job growth out of that 11,000 was in construction, which we know is part of the private sector. Those are private-sector jobs in the construction area.

So we're growing and people are building, people are investing. Businesses are seeing fit to construct more and to double down on Manitoba because know—they know the policies and the objectives and the goals and the visions of this government and this economy is working. It's worth it for the short term and the long term and that's why companies are investing right here in Manitoba.

So in addition to being No. 1 in job growth, 11,000 new jobs and making sure that the bulk of those, the leading area is in construction, it just goes to show that policies like the Manitoba jobs agreement actually work.

They get Manitobans to work. More Manitobans are working because we're prioritizing Manitoba jobs for Manitoba projects. We are ensuring that those jobs, those workers, get good wages while they're working, and at the same time, we're turning construction sites into training sites. That means that while people are working, we're also getting more apprentices into the training positions, getting experience, working right here in Manitoba and getting big projects done.

That's how we move our economy ahead. That's how we improve the lives of Manitobans, with better jobs, higher skills, higher wages. And so we're happy to say that not only are we creating construction sites into training sites, but we're actually training, in technical training, more apprentices, where we've had a record number of apprenticeship training levels year over year. More people are getting trained in apprenticeships than ever before under our government.

And we know that that's going to be the future success as we venture into large economic development projects like the Port of Churchill. Port of Churchill Plus project is huge; it's a national project. Premier (Mr. Kinew) and Prime Minister agree that these are national priorities, and that's why we're proud of leading the way, working collaboratively with First Nations, with private partners, with our post-secondary institutions, with other levels of government. That's how we get things done, when we work together, and we're advancing the Port of Churchill project because we know it's important.

Now, we also know the record of members opposite. We know the records of the former failed PC government, who for seven and a half years took their eye off the ball when it comes to economic development and growth. They did not make any significant impact in growing our economy in their entire seven and a half years.

What evidence do I have to support that statement? Well, the fact that people were fleeing the province under their record is direct evidence. Nearly 10,000 people a year were leaving Manitoba. We had one of the highest net outmigration records in Manitoba's history with 10,000 Manitobans, who are here in Manitoba, saw the bright lights of other jurisdictions and would leave and go somewhere else.

Now, I don't know whether that's directly because of the failed policies of Brian Pallister and Heather Stefanson, or whether it's because they provided no economic future and no significant plan for their growth, that maybe that's why. I'm not sure exactly which reason, but it's obviously one of those two as to why 10,000 Manitobans every year under their former failed PC government were leaving our great province.

\* (11:50)

Instead, we've reversed that trend. With our government here, people are coming to Manitoba, seeing our amazing attributes, our affordability, our incredible educational opportunities, our wonderful industries like life sciences, like aerospace, like agriculture, like technical, like creative industries, that are the lifeblood of our economy. And we're growing those sectors right here. With a growing downtown, with growing sectors right across the province, and including incredible projects like Churchill, Manitoba is back on the map, and that's what we're so proud of in our economy.

So this resolution is off base, honourable Deputy Speaker, but, furthermore, I would say that—submit to you and submit to all Manitobans—that we're on the right economic track. We're building an economy that works for all Manitobans. When it comes to streamlining our approach, we are at the top of the list.

When it comes to looking at groups at CFIB, what have they said? They looked at our report when it came to interprovincial trade—how do we work at lowering barriers between jurisdictions—and gave us an A-minus grade, one of the best in the entire country. That's an independent group looking at what we've done in Manitoba in terms of reducing barriers with other jurisdictions that said that we're one of the best in the country. That's a record that we stand behind.

Now, honourable Deputy Speaker, I want to continue to put words on the record with respect to this bill and ensure that Manitobans all know that we continue to strengthen our economy and its diversity. Now, I had an opportunity to speak in the Committee of Supply Estimates yesterday with the member opposite and was describing to him that we take a very—a lot of pride in the diversity of our economy, the strengths from it being a strong agricultural base, a strong manufacturing base, strong life sciences base and a strong base in manufacturing, but also in technical skills as well as in the creative industries and natural resources.

Now, all this together puts us in a very strong position to have a healthy economy well into the future, that is resilient enough to withstand the tests and the challenge of—that tariffs bring. And that is the largest threat to our economy that we're facing right now. As I described to member opposite, the US, China tariffs have had a significant impact on our economy. Regardless of the narrative that member opposite wants to paste—paint, that is actually the biggest threat to our economy.

And while member opposite tries to deny that narrative—he actually doubles down on thanking Trump for those very tariffs—we instead take a different path. We take a path of standing up for our Canadian economy by doubling down on making our own supply chain more resilient. We double down on our business sector by investing more in making an all-Canadian bill with NFI Group. Or doubling down on our aerospace sector with Magellan, StandardAero or Boeing. We double down on our life sciences sector, we double down on our education and research, we double down on Manitoba, and that's how we get ahead to help all Manitobans.

**MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips):** Okay, honourable Speaker, it's another day, another morning. The PCs walk in with another half-baked PMR into this Chamber.

The member who brought this up walked in this morning, paper in hand, super proud. What does he ask the Chamber to do? Add more red tape, more bureaucracy. This is—these are the sort of ideas that the PCs keep coming up with, half-baked ideas like putting a billion-dollar hole in Manitoba's finances, adding more red tape and bureaucracy to the government, and yet they want to go sit there and pretend like they're the business masterminds.

That member, during his question-and-answer period, for 10 minutes went on a tirade about public service jobs and private service jobs. I'll have that member know that the Province of Manitoba created, what was it, 11,000 jobs in the last month? The highest number in the entire country, the majority of which are private-sector jobs; 50 per cent of Manitoba jobs are private sector, only a quarter are public-sector jobs.

You would listen to the member opposite and he would make you believe that every single person walking out on the street is employed by the government of Manitoba. This is the disdain that these people have for people who work in the public service, the people who work in health care, the people who work

in education, the people who work in this building—the sheer hatred these people have for people who contribute to our economy.

But they want to act like they understand business, that they know business. Honourable Speaker, before I came to this Chamber, before I was elected, I used to work in government relations. I used to have to come to this building all the time and have meetings with ministers, and the biggest problem I would have was that you would get bounced around from office to office, from minister to minister, because the left hand would never spoke to the right hand. They had no idea who was responsible for what.

And the No. 1 feedback you hear from the business community now when you go to a chamber dinner is, we really like how your offices are talking to each other, we love the collaboration that when we talk to the minister of jobs and we know that minister is in close contact with the Minister of Environment. That's what Manitobans want to see when they come here to lobby the government and have conversations and have projects that they want to pursue, that they know that the person they're talking to is actually going to get them somewhere.

Members opposite want to create a whole different office here just to bog down the system even further. The most amount of effort these guys have ever put in helping the business community is trying to ram through a highly, highly suspect mining project when they had no authority to do so.

That's the most effort these people have put in that ended up with Heather Stefanson fined for violating the constitution. The member for Red River North (Mr. Wharton) also fined is still sitting in the Chamber, for violating the constitution.

They haven't done anything for the average Manitoban, but, gee, I wonder who was on the board of Sio Silica at that time that they went something to the wall really hard to get that project through. It wasn't the average Manitoban; it was their buddies, their friends and family sitting on that board. They could care less about the average Manitoban. They could care less about small businesses. They don't know left from right about business.

They want to come in here and pretend like they know what they're talking about. They don't know squat. The fact that the member went on a tirade talking about public service jobs without even recognizing that public service jobs in Manitoba make up only a small portion of the jobs that this province



continues to create under our government betrays the sheer embarrassing lack of knowledge these members have and they come into this Chamber with every single day.

And the smugness when the member or the minister of jobs is talking about creating more jobs in the face of headwinds from the United States and Donald Trump.

The member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth) said, oh, how long are you going to keep blaming that for? They'll do anything.

They'll blame anybody else but Donald Trump. They'll die on any hill for Donald Trump. But God forbid you point out the fact that with President Trump, you have severe economic headwinds that our country, not our province alone, but our country is facing. That consumers pay higher prices at the gas pump but what did the opposition do?

The member, the Leader of the PC Party—thank you, Mr. Trump. Thank you. I love you, Mr. Trump. This is what the member opposite does. So I cannot wait for the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan), the Leader of the Opposition, to take a face plant in the next election so I guess eventually the member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook) can take over. I guess that's—we all know that's going to happen. It's only a matter of time.

But somewhere in there, the amount of money that they're shooting off to Alberta to pay Stephen Carter to come up with some absolutely asinine PMRs that you would think the members of the PC party would say, why are you wasting our money on this stuff?

Coming up with half-baked PMRs in this Chamber day after day. It is so frustrating hearing these guys and then looking over and seeing them smile. You socialists, you this, you that. Go out and talk to the business community. Go to a chamber luncheon. Go anywhere.

It's all positive feedback. It's all positive feedback. They don't trust a word that comes out of the opposition. They saw seven and a half years like a headless chicken. They spent more time trying to knife their own premier in the back than shoehorning a terrible premier in Heather Stefanson. The business community had no idea who they were talking to. *[interjection]*

And the member from Portage La Prairie seems to have taken exception to that. A little bit of heckling going on, a little bit of sweating—sweating into some cheap suits over there.

But here's the problem. Here's the problem, honourable Speaker. The members don't know what they're talking about. The members come into this Chamber every day with a great deal of arrogance and smugness and coming in riding on a high horse about, we know the business community. We are a pro-business party.

But, like I said, they've only shown to care about one business in seven and a half years. And that was Sio Silica. They cared about nothing else, no other business. But Sio Silica, they wanted to get done. They were willing to risk it all for those sands. That's because their buddies were on the board. They wanted to get rich off of it, right?

This was under the same premier who lost \$30 million and completely forgot about it. *[interjection]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Devgan:** So, naturally, if they can find different ways to take—make money off the taxpayers, they're going to keep doing stuff like that—*[interjection]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Devgan:** —but they have the gall and the audacity to come into this Chamber. And now they're heckling. They're so frustrated—so frustrated. *[interjection]* Members commenting about my tie—any day, any day—I appreciate that.

But they're so frustrated with the amount of success this government is having with the business community, the positive feedback that we get from the business community, that they come into this Chamber with half-baked PMRs, asking us to add more regulation—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

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

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

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, April 23, 2026**

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