

First Session – Forty-Third Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 9, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 39—The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister for Municipal and Northern Relations, that Bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce Bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act.

This legislation will restrict the retail sale of machetes, knives, swords and other edged weapons to keep them out of the hands of criminals.

Bill 39 would require retailers to only sell these weapons to individuals over the age of 18, restrict access to these weapons from the public to reduce theft and require all purchasers to provide photo identification at the point of sale. Retail stores would

be required to retain records for all prescribed machete, knife, sword and other edged weapon purchases for a minimum of two years.

Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report of the Department of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care for the fiscal year 2023-24.

Thank you.

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to table the following seven reports: the 2023-24 Travel Manitoba annual report; the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries annual report for 2023-24; the '23-24 annual report for Manitoba Film and Music; the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation annual report for 2023-2024; le Rapport annuel des Conseil des arts du Manitoba Arts Council for 2023-2024; le Rapport annuel du Centre culturel franco-manitobain pour l'année 2023-24; et le Rapport annuel pour le Sport, de la Culture, du Patrimoine et du Tourisme du Manitoba pour 2023-2024.

The Speaker: Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Community Helpers Unite

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): Today I would like to recognize Community Helpers Unite, a trailblazing Indigenous non-profit organization working to cook and distribute food for Winnipeg's North End and beyond.

Community Helpers Unite approach to food accessibility is guided by one important principle: food is medicine. They are an integral part of the community network, cooking and distributing an

impressive 30,000 meals across Winnipeg in a single month. Delivering every meal with kindness, dignity and respect, Community Helpers Unite works towards making food insecurity and waste a thing of the past because nobody deserves to go hungry.

Community Helpers Unite is partnering with several different organizations, cooking and distributing meals to N'Dinawemak warming shelter, KeKiNan Centre for elders and Ikwe-Widdjiitiwin shelter for women. They are also involved with 19 different community walking groups, who distribute food to our relatives in need.

Community Helpers Unite works closely with action therapists to help keep families together, providing emergency food hampers to youth in care. They uplift youth and marginalized folks through education and mentorship, helping to—helping them to find barrier-free employment.

I ask members of the House to join me in celebrating Brandy and Community Helpers Unite for their work. I am humbled by the incredible achievements they've made in our city.

Your ambition and commitment make the world a kinder place. It is an honour to have you—in the gallery, and I look forward to seeing the love and dedication you continue to bring to our community.

I'd like to ask that their names be included in Hansard.

Marcy Abraham, Kyle Bauman, Brandy Bobier, Christopher Bobier, James Dickson, Michael Thiessen

Where the Cottonwoods Grow—Film Screening

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Honourable Speaker, while traveling 20,000 kilometres even in today's modern world is daunting, imagine doing so by a series of trains, ships and steamboat. But that's exactly what Mennonites fleeing imperial Russia did 150 years ago in search of a new life that would preserve their religious freedom and commitment to pacifism.

This story is depicted in the recently released film, *Where the Cottonwoods Grow*. My wife and I had the opportunity to view a screening of the film last Saturday at the historic Krahn Barn in Neuberghal, Manitoba.

Leaving their possessions, their villages and, many cases, their families, the Mennonite migrants of 1874 faced an uncertain journey and many, including young

children, never made it to Manitoba, having died along the path.

When they arrived in Manitoba, having travelled up the Red River by steamboat, the Mennonite families faced oppressive heat and unfamiliar soil as they worked to create farmland and shelter. But the winter posed the greatest threat, and as the film describes, they spent that first winter in small sod-lined quarters, often with multiple families and with farm animals when the weather was bitterly cold. They also relied on the help of local Métis and First Nations peoples both for preparing for winter and for treatment of unfamiliar illness.

Today, what was once known as the east and west reserve, where the Mennonites settled, is populated with vibrant and diverse communities and cities, yet the foundation of those communities is not forgotten.

* (13:40)

Thank you to all those who were involved in producing *Where the Cottonwoods Grow*, especially filmmaker David [*phonetic*] Hildebrand and film collaborator Eleanor Chornoboy. You've helped to preserve an important part of Manitoba's history.

Acknowledging Foster Parents

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I rise this afternoon to recognize Manitoba's foster parents.

The month of October is recognized as foster parent appreciation month. And so it's a good time to reflect on all the passionate folks who open up their hearts and homes to provide love and care to thousands of children.

Over the last couple of years, I've had the opportunity to work with hundreds of foster parents. I truly am inspired by the way foster parents contribute to the well-being of a child's life, whether short term or long term, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Honourable Speaker, it is important to recognize that there is much—still so much work that needs to be done to ensure biological families are never unnecessarily separated. Many children in care often face challenges and we have a role to play in working towards providing safe and caring environments.

Foster parents have and continue to step up in this regard. For example, here in Manitoba, foster parents strive to provide safety, better education on reconciliation, important cultural considerations and a caring home, which are essential to the process of raising a child. Honourable Speaker, oftentimes, the

connection built between a child and foster family can last a lifetime. Foster parents can make such significant impacts on the lives of children.

And this is why on April of 2023, I brought forward a resolution. This resolution called on the provincial government to recognize the valuable role that foster parents play in Manitoba communities. I am so grateful that this House unanimously passed this resolution, and it is why we can stand here today thanking foster parents for the work that they do in recognition of foster parent appreciation month.

Thank you.

The Speaker: I believe the honourable member for Lakeside is next in the rotation.

Laurie Langrell

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize 85-year-old Laurie Langrell, one of Manitoba's 2024 Hockey Hall of Fame inductees this past Saturday.

After winning a title with his hometown Warren Bantams, Laurie Langrell wanted to make the trek into Winnipeg every chance he could to play the best hockey he could find. The tall and athletic Langrell started out as a defenceman, making the jump to junior in 1956 with the Winnipeg Barons of the MJHL.

He'd become a member of the Winnipeg Braves and league all-star as a forward the following year. In 1958-59, Langrell was again a league all-star and the Braves' leading scorer with 42 goals, including a six-goal game in his 63 points.

Playing on the L Line with Bobby Leiter and Al LeBlanc, the Braves captured the MJHL title. Hitting the road, the Braves would knock off Fort William Canadiens and the Edmonton Oil Kings to win the west.

In the 1959 Memorial Cup final, the Braves would meet the eastern champion Peterborough Petes. After losing game one, Langrell's three straight two-goal games helped propel the Winnipeg Braves to the series win and the national junior crown.

During his pro career from '59 and '60 and '65 and '66, he played a season in the EHL and then headed to the IHL with St. Paul, Minneapolis, Port Huron and Des Moines. Langrell also had short stints in the WHL with the Winnipeg Warriors and the Seattle Totems.

Following his pro career, he played for his hometown Warren Mercurys in intermediate C, then the

Selkirk Fishermen in the Manitoba senior league and then was the playing-coach for Morden in the South Eastern League. Langrell coached the St. James Canadians of the MJHL in '71 and '72 and in '72-73. He is also an honoured member of the Manitoba Baseball Hall of Fame; inducted in 2021.

Honourable Speaker, as a hockey dad of four sons who have all played Warren minor hockey, it is my pleasure to honour one of our pioneers of hometown hockey history and heritage in our province.

I congratulate Mr. Laurie Langrell on his induction to Manitoba's hall of Hockey Hall of Fame class of 2024.

Red River Toy Library

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): The Red River Toy Library is a beloved resource for the Fort Garry community, making toys available to our residents regardless of their financial circumstances. Families can sign out up to three items free of charge for up to three weeks at a time. Starting last week, the toy library is now open to the public with expanded hours offering programming not only on Saturday mornings, but on Thursday afternoons as well.

The toy library offers a diverse range of gently used toys and learning materials collected through donations from the public. When families donate toys to this program, there are also environmental benefits. Extending the lifespan of unused toys by re-using or recycling them not only allows other children to enjoy them, but diverts materials from the landfill.

Encouraging children to play is one of the Red River Toy Library's primary objectives. Play promotes creativity, as well as cognitive and language development in children. It also provides opportunities for building healthy emotional and social skills. As families meet and interact at the toy library, social connections are not only made between children, but between community parents as well. Borrowing and returning from the library reinforces the value of sharing in people of all ages.

I'd like to recognize and thank its founders, Ian Scott and Landon Gibson. The toy library opened in April 2021, operating in a space provided rent-free by Fort Garry United Church and has been running successfully ever since. Tireless efforts, time commitment and dedication of Mr. Scott and Ms. Gibson are laid a strong foundation upon which this program can continue to grow.

I'd also like to thank Red River Toy Library's many past and present volunteers and its new administrators from the South Winnipeg Family Information Centre. The dedication shown by these workers directly contribute to a better Fort Garry for our children, families and neighbours.

I invite all community members to visit and engage with the toy library and explore what it has to offer, and together we can make a lasting impact on the lives of our Fort Garry neighbours.

Please join me in honouring Ian Scott and Landon Gibson.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Department of Families Contract for Legal Services

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, we on this side of the House have discovered a financial oddity with this NDP government—a very expensive oddity. In fact, this expense is in the amount of \$1,401,485,806.65.

And, Honourable Speaker, did I mention that this expense by the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) was a direct award? I'm not sure if most Manitobans understand that a direct award is a contract awarded to a supplier without a competitive process, without even soliciting bids.

Why is this minister personally handing out 1-and-a-half-billion-dollar contracts and why has she failed to share the details?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Yes, the PC Party has been documenting a whole litany of financial irregularities this week. It's their former Cabinet colleague, Kevin Klein, who is sharing these things with the public. Of course, not from what the member opposite knows, of course, but when we're talking about what the member opposite knows, you can fill in the blanks there.

When we're talking about the expenses in question that have raised the prospect of financial election laws being broken here in the province of Manitoba, there were new information pieces shared yesterday, new data put on the record. In particular, a trip home from Mexico from one Candice Bergen, which was apparently part of the campaign to put up the stand firm billboards last year.

I'm not sure how all of that connects inside the PC caucus's strategy, but perhaps the member opposite

would like to take this opportunity to explain that to the people of Manitoba.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Once again, Honourable Speaker, dodging and deflecting. This Premier does it very well. He's still all that showmanship and not a statesman.

The \$1.4-billion direct award by the Minister of Families for legal services is more money than the Kinew government has allocated for Transportation and Agriculture, Municipal and Northern Relations, Labour and Immigration, Environment and Climate Change and support—and Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism combined.

We are willing to give the minister the benefit of the doubt that this was potentially a rounding error part, but it begs the question: What other rounding errors were contained in the government's finances?

* (13:50)

I'm going to table the document today, Honourable Speaker, but in fact, I don't know if anybody can actually trust this Premier to be the caretaker of taxpayers' dollars.

Mr. Kinew: Yes. To the members opposite who look at the Leader of the Opposition and wonder what exactly is going on there, I have to say, we wonder the same thing each and every day. Not least of all because when contacted this past Saturday by the Winnipeg Sun, the member opposite did not challenge any of the reporting.

Of course, we know that there were questionable invoices under the auspices of car rentals. There's a whole lot more to come there. But more recently here, with money that was raised from hard-working people across this province who were told that, hey, you know, the PC Party has a chance in 2023—what was paid for? Well, a trip from Mexico to Winnipeg. I'll remind folks, of course, at the time, Candice Bergen was in this very House telling other people that Manitoba schoolchildren were being brainwashed in our K-to-12 system.

So, in addition to explaining these misbegotten expenses, perhaps the member opposite would like to take a stab to explain why he didn't object when he was standing right next to Candice—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Mr. Ewasko: So, Honourable Speaker, again, dodging and deflecting, trying to change the channel from the serious allegations that the MLA for Fort Garry have brought forward in this House about the abusive and toxicity brought forward by the Premier of Manitoba, the MLA for Fort Rouge.

In addition to that—I know that the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) is nodding her head and agreeing with the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv)—but also the absolute assault that the Premier has done. This isn't the first time we've seen this, Honourable Speaker.

I just wish that the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) would stand up and apologize, and actually apologize also to Manitobans for spending \$1.4 billion on a direct award contract from the Department of Families, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Kinew: Yes. It might be that the, you know, member opposite is about to blow the lid off of this whole vast conspiracy, and tomorrow he'll be back here explaining why I'm responsible for the chemtrails all over Manitoba's skies. Or it could be that the member opposite is part of a financially and morally bankrupt PC Party. That's certainly what it looks like from the outside.

People this week are saying, and I quote, in the Winnipeg Sun today: We have a party in panic mode, and where there's smoke, there's fire. The revelation of sketchy campaign expenses is damning. End quote.

When we talk about losing the plot, how come the member opposite or anyone else in the PC caucus never says one name: Brian Pallister. The reason why I ask: nobody on that side of the House has won an election in 30 years without Brian Pallister.

Paramedic Services Hiring Target

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): We recently learned that the NDP has fallen dismally short of its promise to hire 90 net new paramedics this year. Of the 90 promised, the NDP has only hired seven.

I recently spoke with a number of concerned paramedics, several of whom told me that 90 was never a realistic number. They told me that even if every existing paramedicine program ran at full capacity, they wouldn't be able to produce 90 new paramedics in one year. They told me someone in government didn't do their homework.

We're more than halfway through the fiscal year. Can the Minister of Health explain to Manitobans how

their government plans to hire another 83 paramedics by March?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Well, we use the 50 per cent of the year remaining to hire more paramedics. This builds on the success that we've already shown in the first half of this year. Whereas for years and years under the Progressive Conservatives, we lost nurses from the front lines. We lost paramedics from rural Manitoba.

Where rural Manitobans came here each and every day demanding shorter wait times, guess what happened? One year ago today, things changed in our province. We began to staff up the provincial health-care system. There are hundreds more nurses working at the bedside today, 160 new physicians, including many in rural Manitoba and, of course, many allied health professionals, including the very paramedics that the member opposite acknowledges in the preamble to her question.

It seems that the only criticism that the PCs have of us is the great job the NDP is doing. Why aren't you doing more of it sooner?

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

Primary Care Paramedic Program Changes to Entrance Prerequisite

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Earlier this year, paramedicine schools were notified they could drop an important prerequisite from the PCP program. Anatomy and physiology is no longer required for students entering a primary-care paramedic program in Manitoba.

I'll table an email I received from a concerned paramedic who says, quote: A and P is the foundation of a paramedic, and without a strong foundation, the paramedics will struggle, and the public is going to receive substandard care. No other allied health program allows a student to enter without an A and P background. We are trying to move the profession forward, and this is moving it backwards.

Can the Minister of Health explain why standards are being lowered for the primary-care paramedic program and what impact this will have on patient care?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Perhaps the member opposite would like to know, or would like to share with the people of Manitoba, why standards are being lowered in the PC Party.

Time was, they stood for fiscal responsibility. At least they claimed to do so before gutting programs designed to help the most vulnerable of Manitobans. But, of course, in the past year, we've seen that, again, they're approving expenses for trips to Mexico, for car rentals and then passing on the bill to hard-working Manitobans.

Now, when we talk about the paramedics, which the member opposite acknowledges that we are staffing up, I want to point out one simple aspect of the records: throughout two and a half—throughout two terms in government, seven and a half years, there was a net loss of paramedics in Manitoba.

The PC Party stands for fewer paramedics working on our highways. We are hiring more.

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

Mrs. Cook: I'll quote again from the same email I just tabled. Quote: The understanding is that this change was forced onto the College of Paramedics of Manitoba by the sitting government to boost graduate numbers. Unquote.

Did the NDP government interfere with the operations of an independent, regulatory body in a desperate attempt to make their budget commitment a reality?

Mr. Kinew: No. Did a desperate PC Party lead to an exodus of paramedics working in rural Manitoba? Yes. Unfortunately, that was very much the case.

Rural Manitoba lost 87 paramedics while the PCs were in power; 87 paramedics who could've been there on the double when rural Manitobans needed help. That's in addition to, of course, the multiple emergency departments closed throughout the rural parts of this province.

What's the record that we have so far, one year into office? Well, the member opposite acknowledges we've got more paramedics today than when they left offices. And how are we doing on rural ERs? Well, there are more of those open today than were under their watch too.

So once again, what are the PCs banging on their desks on at question period? The NDP's doing a great job and we can't wait to see more happen sooner.

MRI Services Portage la Prairie

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, I wanted to quote from the Health Minister's mandate letter: Your goal is to make it easier for every

Manitoban to access health care at every level, no matter where they live.

Can you please explain to the patient from Amaranth, Manitoba, who's going for an MRI without a vehicle, that has an appointment at Boundary Trails at 7 a.m., how are they supposed to get there and who's paying for this six-hour trip?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): As a government, we are making investments and working with our partners to ensure that we're strengthening health care across the entire province.

The previous government's approach to health care was to cut services in Winnipeg, cut services in the North, cut services in rural Manitoba. They went so far as to cut the very resources needed to recruit doctors and professionals to rural Manitoba to provide that care, which is shameful.

Our government is not only cleaning up the mess and the damage that they have done, but our government is investing in strengthening those services for Manitobans, no matter where they live. We will continue to work each and every day with our partners, with the front lines, to make health care better here in our province.

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

* (14:00)

MLA Bereza: On April 9, I received a letter from 35 doctors in Portage la Prairie. In their letter, which I will table, the doctors stated: Deciding to not fund and staff an MRI scanner in our community will negatively affect patient care in the future.

Can the Health Minister please explain why this government is not listening to doctors?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House we respect physicians. We work with doctors, we listen to experts to make informed decisions that strengthen health care in this province.

I've had the opportunity to talk with physicians in Portage la Prairie. I've had the opportunity to work directly with our provincial clinical lead for diagnostics, and did his due diligence to assess what's happening there.

And it's important to note that every single doctor highlights the fact that the previous government took no steps whatsoever to boost capacity here in Manitoba. Instead, they cut it. They fired health-care workers

and they didn't bother to invest to train the health-care workers needed to actually staff diagnostics.

We're investing in strengthening health care, hiring more people to the front lines, hundreds more added to the health-care system; and we're going to keep doing that work for Manitobans in rural Manitoba.

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

MLA Bereza: Honourable Speaker, can the Health Minister please explain why they will not accept a contribution of \$5 million from the Portage hospital foundation to pay for an MRI, or even discuss the need for an MRI, with the Portage hospital foundation.

The people who have contributed to this fund deserve to know why a donation to help their region is being refused by this Minister of Health.

Thank you.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I had a conversation with a constituent of Portage la Prairie just within the last 48 hours, who was shocked to learn that her representative had been misrepresenting information to constituents for the past several months.

She was shocked to learn while that member stands up and goes out in community and tells them that \$5 million is all it takes to buy an MRI and staff it and run it, doing that, knowing full well that that is completely and patently false. That member stands up and misleads community members in the hopes of advancing his own political career.

On this side of the House we stand in truth. We make investments that strengthen health care, and we work with professionals and leaders to make health care better. We don't advance mistruths and false information for our own selfish political gain.

Need for New School Construction Future of German Language Program

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): The efforts of the NDP government to cancel any new school construction across this province are coming to fruition.

Now we see, coming out in the news this morning, that a German language school program that's run successfully for 40 years is at risk, with students who have been in the program for a number of years being denied to continue their education in this program because of this government's failure to build adequate school space for expanding student populations.

So will this new Minister of Education come forward with her plan to build more school capacity in this province?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, for years Manitobans had a government that cut education, and they now know they got a government that is investing in schools and investing in education.

We know the PCs are desperate. They are desperate to change the channel from the car rental fiasco but, Honourable Speaker, Manitobans deserve answers. They spent \$3,800 on a falsified invoice, and taxpayers paid 25 per cent of that.

We need to get to the bottom of this, and the Leader of the Opposition needs to be accountable. You can't just change the letterhead and expect the problem to go away.

Will he stand up today and apologize on behalf of his party for ignoring the red flags that a PC staffer raised?

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

Mr. Jackson: Well, you know, we know the Minister of Finance has lots of leadership 'aspirations' of his own, and he wants to take on all the files on that side of the government. But the question was for the new Minister of Education, specific to a German language education program that operates in the northeast end of Winnipeg where she represents.

What is she going to do to build more school capacity for her constituents and everyone else on the northeast side of Winnipeg?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, what we want to know is: If they were renting a car, why didn't they just use Enterprise or Budget or Avis? Well, it's a good question.

We still do not know. We still do not have the answers we need on the car rental scandal. As we were saying, a PC whistle-blower raised concerns and was ignored.

This isn't some random NDP insider; this is a PC accountant within their party that raised these concerns. He said in media, and I quote: I am most disappointed with PC Party President Brent Pooles. He avoided me and didn't want to listen to my concerns. End quote.

Will the member apologize on behalf of this party president for refusing to listen to these legitimate concerns?

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

Mr. Jackson: Well, the only people who are going to be disappointed after today's interaction, Honourable Speaker, are the parents of students who have had long-standing attendance in the German language school program in northeast Winnipeg. Because this Finance Minister has no answers for them as to why their students can't continue in the program and no plan to build more schools in this province—14 new schools in seven and a half years; zero in one year for them, with a plan to build zero moving forward.

When will this Finance Minister get to work and build new schools for Manitobans?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, there isn't a single Manitoban that believes that the members opposite invested in education over the last seven years. They know we're doing that work.

When faced with a falsified invoice, the PC whistle-blower wrote, quote: Can you imagine if donors knew their funds were used to pay for this? End quote.

He doesn't need to imagine anymore, Honourable Speaker. In fact, we're already hearing from PC members who've cancelled their donations since the news broke on Sunday.

On this side of the House, we're investing in fixing health care, and breakfasts in schools for children. On that side of the House, they're investing in intimacy coaches and trips to Mexico.

Will the Leader of the PC Party apologize to his donors right now for misusing their money—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Access to Affordable Child Care Spaces Needed for Rural Manitoba

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Honourable Speaker, constituents of mine are raising concerns over lack of access to affordable child care. They've taken the initiative to raise almost \$500,000 to get a daycare in their community.

According to the Province's child-care search website, there are no spaces available near Austin or MacGregor, no spaces in Portage la Prairie and no full-time spaces in Brandon.

We know this government has cut daycare spaces and new schools, so can the minister explain what the

plan is to ensure that all Manitobans have access to child care?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): It's a pleasure to stand up in this Chamber to talk about the saga of the PC election spending scandal continuing.

More news has come to light about questionable invoices, less clarity around who knew what and the silencing of whistle-blowing staff. Falsified records—*[interjection]* I would answer one if you ever asked one—broken election laws, whistle-blowers.

It's safe to say this story is not going away. You all know it's not going away. It's a real mess. That's what the opposition party is dealing with: a real mess.

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

Ms. Byram: Honourable Speaker, the NDP have no plan for daycare. That's what we heard in that—affordable daycare for Manitobans is important. We have families in my constituency paying upward of \$7,000 for their child care. That's \$14,000 for children—for two children.

We are in an affordability crisis. Rural Manitobans need access to \$10-a-day daycare spaces. Under the former PC government, we had a plan to open thousands of more spaces across the province.

Can the minister inform the House what their plan is to ensure all rural families have access to affordable child care close to home?

MLA Cable: Well, we all know how these plans panned out for the PCs. And the back of the napkin in a small-town café isn't a plan, just like the schools, the daycares were the same.

* (14:10)

But speaking of writing shady napkin plans, some more are connected to a well-known politician, more shadow companies offering some real service variety. More and more questions, fewer and fewer answers, and people of Manitoba deserve to know.

Given that many invoices lacked GST, will the PC members clarify that their party isn't also committing tax fraud? Why did the party feel it necessary to pay fund—to fund Candice Bergen's trip to Mexico in the spring of 2023? And I wonder how—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Ms. Byram: So again, a clear answer there from the NDP. They have no plan for daycare for Manitobans, Honourable Speaker, and sadly this is not just the case in my constituency but across many communities in western Manitoba. Parents are organizing and raising funds to support bringing child care to their community. This government made a commitment to Manitobans that they would build accessible and affordable child-care spaces.

So can the minister tell us: When exactly can the residents of western Manitoba expect to see \$10-a-day child-care spaces in their communities?

MLA Cable: The answer to that question is: Stay tuned. But it's not surprising, Honourable Speaker, that when we see how the internal PC Party finances were handled that those members left Manitobans with a \$2-billion deficit. Their financial acumen, their ability to responsibly hold the purse strings of their own party, let alone the Province, is deeply, deeply called into question.

It doesn't bode well for their upcoming leadership race, but I suppose when it comes to PC leadership races, questionable ethics are par for the course. No lessons learned on that side of the House, it appears.

On this side of the House we're focused on working for Manitobans.

Discarded Needles in Public Places Responsibility for Collection and Disposal

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I quote: I've been coaching baseball for 10 years and this is the first year I had to make sure I made it to the dugout before even the first kid stepped foot in the dugout or onto the field to scour the benches for items like this. Note, they're not the only one I found this year. End quote.

This was the comment shared by little league baseball coach Jason Delaurier in reference to the minister's belief that schoolchildren can safely dispose of used and dirty needles. Coach Delaurier attached a picture of the used needles laying on the dugout bench, which I table. Children should be catching baseballs, not hepatitis.

Will the minister be making hypodermic needle, puncture-resistant, latex-coated shield gloves—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Before I recognize the minister to answer, I'd remind all members that when the Speaker stands up and says your time is expired, that means it's time for you to quit speaking and sit down. Your mic has been shut

off as soon as I stand up and say that, so it's not a matter on the record anyway.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We are working with the affected community on this important issue, and I have full confidence in the minister that we will be able to address the issue going forward.

But another thing I'd like to talk about, Honourable Speaker, is the fact that today, Kevin Klein's Winnipeg Sun confirmed—confirmed—that a cheque for \$3,800 was sent by members opposite to an intimacy coach.

Manitoba, Honourable Speaker, has many legitimate car rental services. This surely was not one of them. Manitobans deserve to know what members opposite found so special about this company that they falsified financial records instead of paying a legitimate car rental service.

Will the leader opposite get up today and explain what his party was really doing in their dying days of their failed government?

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

Mr. Balcaen: A quote: This is not harm reduction; this is harm redistribution. You're only fooling yourself if you think this is reducing harm to others in society. These crazy programs, based on enabling, needs to stop now. End quote.

This was the perspective shared by Coach Delaurier who now has to worry about his own health instead of just the odd foul ball. More and more, Manitobans see the minister's public injection sites as harm redistribution.

Why is this minister redistributing harm instead of reducing it?

MLA Schmidt: Honourable Speaker, this side of the House will take no lessons from the member opposite when it comes to harm reduction, something they did not believe in and something they did absolutely nothing about for seven and a half years.

What they did do in the last election, Honourable Speaker, is they spent their donors' money on stand firm billboard ads, trips to Mexico and, apparently, intimacy coaches. Today, a paper co-owned by PCs published a piece that stated, and I quote: Today we have a party in panic mode. Where there's smoke, there is fire. The revelation of sketchy campaign expenses is damning.

The member of Fort Whyte is at the centre of the Sun's allegations, and more details are coming out every day. We expect more tomorrow, I'm sure.

Will members opposite commit to investigating his role before the leadership deadline next week?

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

Mr. Balcaen: This minister won't send properly equipped used-needle crews to clean up her mess. The minister won't provide children with hypodermic needle puncture-resistant gloves. It seems the only thing this minister is providing are crack pipes and syringes.

For the information of the residents of Swan River and Swan Valley West, I will make this question clear: Minister, who is responsible for safely collecting and disposing of used needles in this community? Because we know it is not her.

MLA Schmidt: Honourable Speaker, there is a mess to clean up and it is the mess that is caused after seven and a half years of a reckless government, a government that did not care about Manitobans. We have full confidence in our minister and we are so proud of the work that she is doing.

But, Honourable Speaker, the Sun also reported today that members opposite spent almost \$1,000 to fly Candice Bergen back from Mexico to make a speech here in the Legislature. When she got here, she told a room full of MLAs that Manitoba children were being brainwashed by their teachers. Shame on all of you. She was standing next to the then-Education minister, the MLA for Lac du Bonnet.

Will he get up today and apologize for failing to stand up for Manitoba teachers when he was the Education minister?

Mountain View School Board—Flag Ban Concerns for 2SLGBTQ+ Community

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Advocates in the Dauphin area are concerned that a recent decision by the Mountain View school board to ban all flags except provincial, federal and school flags was made with ill intention towards the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

In the government's 2023 Throne Speech, it was stated that in every part of the province, our government will ensure that queer and trans students in Manitoba are safe, respected and know they belong.

Honourable Speaker, does this recent action by the Mountain View school board align with this statement?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): It is a privilege—I would like to start by just sharing my feelings that I feel that it is a real privilege and an honour and a duty to serve Manitobans and to help this team in this role as acting Education Minister.

We are a team, and we are going to get through this time as a team. I have full confidence in this team. And I would just like to take a quick moment to speak directly to our team member, the MLA for Transcona and his family who care about him deeply and let him know that we miss him greatly and we look forward to him coming back to this House.

I will answer the question in my—in the next answer.

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

MLA Lamoureux: The Mountain View school board made this decision without quorum, which has only created more concern about their intention.

Will this government do as stated and work with committees and school divisions to ensure every family is welcome and included in their school?

MLA Schmidt: I thank the member opposite for raising this question.

* (14:20)

We do understand that there have been issues raised by the community about school board governance. That's why our government took action and we appointed an oversight panel that has been appointed to assist the Mountain View School Division board of trustees to focus their efforts on creating safe learning environments for all of our students.

There's more work to do; there's more work to come. We are here to work with that community and support all of those families and specifically those vulnerable children.

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

MLA Lamoureux: Last June, the Mountain View superintendent was removed from his position because he expressed support for a local Pride parade. Three trustees resigned days after. And Honourable Speaker—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would ask the two leaders to please quit hollering back and forth across the—*[interjection]* And I would ask the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Ewasko) to remain silent while the Speaker is talking.

The honourable member for Tyndall Park, please restart your question.

MLA Lamoureux: Last June, the Mountain View superintendent was removed from his position because he expressed support for a local Pride parade. Three trustees resigned days after. And Honourable Speaker, another long-term trustee resigned this past Monday because, and I quote: The conduct he witnessed by board members is not something he could support or continue to be associated with.

What is this government doing to ensure the safety and well-being of these students specifically, and specifically with an eye on diversity, inclusion and reconciliation, as promised?

MLA Schmidt: It's been said once before, maybe twice or maybe 10 times, but it is a new day here in Manitoba.

And thank goodness for the students in that school division, and thank goodness to—for—to all of Manitobans for electing a government that stands firmly with the 2SLGB—two—Q—I apologize, I'm getting a little bit tongue-tied here. What I'm trying to say, Honourable Speaker, is that our bench stands firmly.

We will always stand up for kids, we will always stand up for families, we will always stand up for inclusivity; unlike the members opposite, who, in fact, ran their election campaign attacking the very children that we're talking about.

It is a new day here in Manitoba. We will always stand up for queer kids, we will always stand up for their families—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Extended Hours Primary-Care Clinic Grace Hospital Announcement

MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia): People don't get sick exclusively during business hours, and the needs of Manitobans vary across this province. That is why I was so excited when our NDP government announced the opening of an extended hours primary-care clinic in Manitoba at the Grace Hospital.

The Stefanson PCs made no effort to increase access to primary care. But we know how important it is for Manitoba families, parents and workers.

Will the Minister of Health tell us more about the extended hours clinic and the benefits it will have for all Manitobans?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank my colleague for Assiniboia for that great question.

I am so proud to be part of a government that listens to Manitobans. The extended hours primary-care clinic at the Grace Hospital will make sure that Manitobans can see a family doctor in the evenings, on the weekends and during holidays because we understand, as a government, that when it comes to your family's health, there are no off hours. Manitobans need access all the time. And this means that fewer people will have to take time away from work to bring their kids and their families to appointments.

There's been a gap for hard-working Manitobans in care that our government is working hard to close. And we promise to make health care more accessible, and we're doing that work with the front lines and with our experts to get that done for all Manitobans.

The Speaker: Is there a question from the official opposition? If not, then we will move on to the next—*[interjection]* Order.

If there's no more questions from the official opposition at this time, then we will move on to the next member in rotation.

So I will now recognize the honourable member for Fort Garry.

Fuel Tax Rate Grocery Prices

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): The Premier (Mr. Kinew) borrowed \$340 million for a gas tax holiday. The overwhelming amount goes to business and corporations, with very little trickling down to Manitobans. CCPA estimates that the average driver will save \$15 per month.

Now, the Premier made a promise to Manitobans that the gas tax holiday would reduce their grocery bill. Manitobans know that's not true; in fact, grocery bills are at an all-time high. This Premier broke his promise. Will he take responsibility?

Will the Premier now admit that when it comes to making groceries affordable, he's done nothing, he's tried nothing and he's all out of ideas?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Thank you for the rousing welcome from the opposition benches.

I'd like to take a minute again to talk about our team. On this side of the House, we are a united team. We are united behind our Premier (Mr. Kinew). By the way, Honourable Speaker, I don't know if you heard the news: the most—still the most popular Premier across the country.

We are united. We are so proud of our plan. We are proud of our grass tax holiday. Manitobans love the gas tax holiday. We are proud of the extension. We are saving Manitobans money each and every single day.

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

Mr. Wasyliw: There are many Manitobans who don't drive, that don't own a car, including low-income Manitobans and seniors. They will see no benefit from the gas tax holiday. When the Premier first announced this gas tax holiday, he promised he would lower food prices.

The Premier even went further, and I quote: Expected the grocery chains to pass on the savings to Manitoba. He went even further and said if we don't see those savings materialize, then that's when we're going to follow up on these further steps. And he went even still further and said he would call the bluff of the grocery stores, and I'll table those comments here today.

So today it's time for us to call the Premier's bluff: Can the Premier tell Manitobans why their grocery bills didn't go down and have remained at—

The Speaker: The member's time is expired.

MLA Schmidt: Honourable Speaker, the member opposite was glad to campaign and win his seat on the back of that promise, promise that was kept, a promise that Manitobans appreciate and a promise that Manitobans are saving money at the pump each and every single day.

Manitoba continues to enjoy the lowest inflation across the country, and the member opposite, quite frankly, is chewing on sour grapes.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Statement

The Speaker: And I have a statement for the House. *[interjection]*

Order, please. Order, please.

Before I call petitions, I need to advise the House of an inadvertent omission on today's Order Paper. The name of the honourable member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk) was accidentally removed from the list of members eligible to present petitions.

This was an Assembly mistake, and we have now corrected the online version of the Order Paper.

We have also printed select copies of the corrected Order Paper, and if any member would like a revised copy, please ask the clerks.

Accordingly, if the member for Swan River wishes to read a petition today, I will be recognizing him.

Thank you.

PETITIONS

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

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

* (14:30)

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

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

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

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

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

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

(6) Premiers across Canada, including the Atlantic provinces that benefit from this decision, have

collectively sent a letter to the federal government, calling on it to extend the carbon tax exemption to all forms of home heating, with the exception of Manitoba.

(7) Manitoba is one of the only provincial jurisdictions to have not agreed with the stance that all Canadians' home heating bills should be exempt from the carbon tax.

MLA Robert Loiselle, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by Kylie [*phonetic*] Specula, Julianna Roberts, Brett Johnson and many, many other Manitobans.

Little Mountain Park

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The Manitoba Highways department has expressed a desire to have the CentrePort Canada Way to Chief Peguis Trail extension developed to follow Klimpke Road with a termination point on the centre point Canada way.

(2) The proposed path would eliminate a portion of Little Mountain Park, which abrupts Klimpke Road, private residences and the neighbouring Little Mountain SportsPlex.

(3) Although located in the RM of Rosser, Little Mountain Park is one of Winnipeg's valuable green spaces, located within the Perimeter Highway boundary, and is the only significant green space in the north-western sector of the city.

(4) Little Mountain Park has been providing recreational opportunities and natural habitat for local wildlife since it was established in 1965. It contains a tall grass prairie ecosystem on the ecologically sensitive land, complete with flora and fauna, and is a destination for tourists from all over.

(5) The impact of the growing industrial port of the resultant redirected traffic through this area would not only disrupt access to the nearby Sportsplex and golf course with the additional heavy traffic, but would also pose environmental threats, and disrupt local wildlife in the nearby Little Mountain Park.

(6) The Province of Manitoba has a stated responsibility to protect the environment and green spaces for the benefit of all Manitobans with policies and legislation that support economic development, investment, trade and natural resources and the conservation of species and the ecosystem to the—to conserve these precious resources for future generations.

(7) The encroachment of the proposed highway must be considered a threat to the Little Mountain Park designated ecosystem.

(8) An earlier proposal utilized a different route that followed the existing old Sturgeon Road footprint, circumventing Little Mountain Park and the Sportsplex, while still providing suitable access to the industrial area with a termination point between Mollard Road and Jefferson Avenue.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to recognize Little Mountain Park as an at-risk ecosystem and as a potential ecosystem preservation zone.

(2) To urge the provincial government to recognize the impact of the proposed route on Little Mountain Park, The Players Course, the neighbouring Little Mountain Sportsplex and the citizens and tourists who use and visit them.

(3) To urge the provincial government to seek an alternate route that would avoid the area while still providing adequate ingress and egress to the centre point—CentrePort Canada Way, such as old Sturgeon Road route, and avoid expropriating land unnecessarily.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

The Acting Speaker (Robert Loiselle): Have to hit it harder. Sorry.

Breast Screening

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

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

(1) Due to the evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society is now urging all provinces

and territories to lower the starting age for breast screening to 40.

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

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

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

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast cancer screening age, or announced their intention to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists in their public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age.

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

* (14:40)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Honourable Speaker, this petition has signed by Ron Shaluk, Ted Snure, Susan McMillan and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(7) Manitoba is one of the only provincial jurisdictions to have not agreed with the stance that all Canadians' home heating bills should be exempt from the carbon tax.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by Shanpreet [*phonetic*] Sehgal, Regan Ingeberg, R. Warkentin and many, many more fine Manitobans, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Breast Screening

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast cancer screening age, or announced their intentions to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into the public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly—the legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by Tara-Lee Ricard, Justin [*phonetic*] Sesiuk, Barbara Coelho and many more Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Medical Assistance in Dying

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

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

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

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

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

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

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition.

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling

with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

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

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

* (14:50)

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

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

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

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition.

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling

with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

These are signed by Megan Visscher, Norman Veenendaal, Heather Veldman and many, many more Manitobans.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition.

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

This petition is signed by Pete Rempel, Martha Rempel, Bill Rempel and many, many Manitobans.

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

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

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

(2) Suicidally—sorry, I can't say that word—is often a synonym—symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between age 10 and 19.

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

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

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

This petition has been signed by Peter Dyck, Brittany Thiessen and Steve Ackerson and many, many more Manitobans.

Provincial Trunk Highway 2

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

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

(1) Provincial Trunk Highway 2, or PTH 2, is a 315-kilometre, 196-mile highway that runs from the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border to Winnipeg's Perimeter Highway.

(2) A significant portion of PTH 2 runs through the constituency of Spruce Woods, from the border of the rural municipality of Pipestone and the rural municipality of Sifton to the border of the rural municipality of Victoria and the rural municipality of Norfolk-Treherne.

(3) This route is historically significant, as it follows the original path taken in 1874 by the North West Mounted Police in their march west from Fort Dufferin to Fort Whoop-Up.

* (15:00)

(4) PTH 2 is a significant commuting route for Westman families and is also utilized by those in the trade, commerce, tourism, agriculture and agri-food industries.

(5) The condition of PTH 2, from the east side of the town of Souris straight through to the hamlet of Deleau, is in an unacceptable state of disrepair.

(6) The newly appointed Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure has confirmed the department has no plan to refurbish this stretch of road until the 2028-2029 construction season.

(7) The minister outlined that the current 2028-2029 construction plan does not include the stretch of PTH 2 that runs through the town of Souris, but instead starts on the west side of town.

(8) The communities in the area have been clear that any reconstruction of PTH 2 must include the stretch that runs through the town of Souris.

(9) The minister and the Premier have a duty to respond to infrastructure needs identified by rural communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier and the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to immediately prioritize the reconstruction of Provincial Trunk Highway 2 in the upcoming construction season.

(2) To urge the provincial government to include the stretch of Provincial Trunk Highway 2 that runs through the town of Souris in its reconstruction plans.

This petition has been signed by Gail Williamson, Disha Patel, Gerry Williams and many more fine Manitobans.

Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by Sean *[phonetic]* Steeves, Lin Steeves, Sahib Nanab and many, many Manitobans.

Louise Bridge

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

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

(1) Over 25,000 vehicles per day cross the Louise Bridge, which has served as a vital link for vehicular traffic between northeast Winnipeg and the downtown for the last 113 years.

The current structure will undoubtedly be declared unsafe in a few years at it's—as it has deteriorated extensively and now functionally obsolete, and therefore more subject to more frequent unplanned repairs and cannot be widened to accommodate future traffic capacity.

(3) As far back as 2008, the City of Winnipeg has studied where the new replacement bridge should be situated.

(4) After including the bridge replacement in the City's five-year capital budget forecast in 2009, the new bridge became a short-term construction priority in the City's transportation master plan of 2011.

(5) City capital and budget plans identified replacement of the Louise Bridge on a site just east of the bridge and expropriated homes there on the south side of Nairn Avenue in anticipation of a 2015 start.

(6) In 2014, the new City administration did not make use of available federal infrastructure funds.

(7) The new Louise Bridge Committee began its campaign to demand a new bridge and its surveys confirmed residents wanted a new bridge beside the current bridge, with the old bridge kept open for local traffic.

(8) The City tethered the Louise Bridge replacement issue to its new transportation master plan and eastern corridor project. Its recommendations have now identified the location of the new Louise bridge to be placed just to the west of the current bridge, not to the east as originally proposed.

(9) The City expropriation process has begun. The \$6.35-million street upgrade of Naim Avenue from Watt Street to the 113-year-old bridge is complete.

* (15:10)

(10) The new City administration has delayed the decision on the Louise Bridge for a minimum of one year, and possibly up to 10 years, unless the Province steps in on behalf of northeast Winnipeg residents and completes the overdue link.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier to financially assist the City of Winnipeg on building this three-lane bridge in each direction to maintain this vital link between northeast Winnipeg, Transcona and the downtown.

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

(3) To urge the provincial government to consider the feasibility of keeping the old bridge open for active transportation in the future.

This petition has been signed by Joel Tourond, Greg Bugera, Jason Tostowaryk and many, many Manitobans.

Provincial Road 275

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

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

Provincial Road 275, known as Ditch Road because there's more ditch than road, intersects with PR 588, serving rural areas west of the town of Swan River, and is a heavily used traffic corridor linking Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The highway curves on entry into the town of Swan River and terminates at Provincial Trunk Highway 10A, the town's north bypass.

The Swan River Valley is a highly productive agriculture area, and PR 275 is used by farmers to move heavy machinery and equipment as well as transport seed, grain and fertilizer to many farmers located within reach of the highway.

It is also frequented by families, people shopping at business along the route and school buses to transport rural students into the town of Swan River for school.

Due to only having patchwork and minor repairs, the highway has 'deteriorated' and is covered with large potholes, posing a significant threat to vehicles and passengers.

The roadway and shoulders of PR 275 are extremely narrow, leaving large ditches that have not been properly cared for, which has caused poor drainage. The town of Swan River and the municipality of Swan River West have enquired with MTI for a drainage solution over the past several years. The ditch is not graded properly and is full of bullrush, willows and cattails.

The solution brought forward is to decrease maximum speed limits on the road and to undertake a full rehabilitation of the highway and to re-route the stream through what is now existing farmland, under CN rail lines and Provincial Trunk Highway 10A bypass, as well as through several hundred meters of existing slough into the Swan River.

Numerous meetings were held with Swan Valley West and the town of Swan River with the provincial government have not moved forward. It was agreed in 2022 the MTI was to complete a hydraulic investigation of the capacity of PR 275 2nd Avenue ditch. The municipality has not seen the results of this investigation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to address the much-needed rehabilitation of Provincial Road 275 to ensure public safety.

To urge the provincial government to provide the results of the MPI investigation to the town and municipality and provide immediate funding for the repairs of PR 275.

And to urge the provincial government to address drainage issues on PR 275 and create permanent solutions so that flooding can be avoided.

This petition has been signed by Rick Bobby, Dwight Potts, Lori Campbell and many, many other Manitobans.

Medical Assistance in Dying

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

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

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

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

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

The Speaker in the Chair

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

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition.

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

This petition is signed by Harlan Perchotte, Reed Sutherland, Gerald Sawatsky and many other Manitobans.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Beginning March 17, 2024, persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

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

* (15:20)

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

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

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

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

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

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports, instead of offering

medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition.

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

This is signed by Leon Tetreault, Agnes Pelletier, Monique Chaput and many, many other Manitobans.

Louise Bridge

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

Over 25,000 vehicles per day cross the Louise Bridge, which has served as a vital link for vehicular traffic between northeast Winnipeg and the downtown for the last 113 years.

(2) The current structure will undoubtedly be declared unsafe in a few years as it has deteriorated extensively, and is now functionally obsolete, and therefore more subject to more frequent, unplanned repairs and cannot be widened to accommodate future traffic capacity.

(3) As far back as 2008, the City of Winnipeg has studied where the new replacement bridge should be situated.

(4) After including the bridge replacement in the City's five-year capital budget forecast in 2009, the new bridge became a short-term construction priority in the City's Transportation Master Plan of 2011.

(5) City capital and budget plans identified replacement of the Louise Bridge on a site just east of the bridge and expropriated homes on the south side of Nairn Avenue in anticipation of the 2015 start.

(6) In 2014, the new City administration did not make use of the available federal infrastructure funds.

(7) The new Louise Bridge Committee began its campaign to demand a new bridge and its surveys confirmed residents wanted a new bridge beside the

current bridge, with the old bridge kept open for local traffic.

(8) The City tethered the Louise Bridge replacement issue to its new transportation master plan and eastern corridor project. Its recommendations have now identified the location of the new Louise bridge to be placed just to the west of the current bridge, not to the east as originally proposed.

(9) The City expropriation process has begun. The \$6.35-million street upgrade of Nairn Avenue from Watt Street to the 113-year-old bridge is now complete.

(10) The new City administration has delayed the decision on the Louise Bridge for a minimum of one year, and possibly up to 10 years, unless the Province steps in on behalf of northeast Winnipeg residents and completes the overdue link.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier to financially assist the City of Winnipeg on building this three-lane bridge in each direction to maintain this vital link between northeast Winnipeg, Transcona and the downtown.

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

(3) To urge the provincial government to consider the feasibility of keeping the old bridge open for active transportation in the future.

This petition is signed by Guy Lagimodière, Darren Orvis, Carol Hainsworth and many, many Manitobans.

Provincial Road 275

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road 275, known as Ditch Road, intersects with PR 588 serving rural areas west of the town of Swan River. It is a heavily used travel corridor linking Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The highway

curves on entry into the town of Swan River and terminates at PTH 10A, the town's north bypass.

(2) The Swan River Valley is a highly productive agricultural area and PR 275 is used by farmers to move heavy machinery and equipment, as well as transport seed, grain and fertilizer to many farmers located within reach of the highway.

(3) It is also frequented by families, people at-shopping at businesses along the route and school buses to transport rural students into the town of Swan River for school.

(4) Due to only having patchwork and minor repairs, the highway has deteriorated and is covered with large potholes, posing a significant threat to vehicles and passengers.

(5) The roadway and shoulders on PR 275 are extremely narrow, leaving large ditches that have not been properly cared for, which has caused poor drainage.

* (15:30)

The town of Swan River and the Municipality of Swan Valley West have inquired with MTI for a drainage solution over the past several years. This ditch is not graded properly and is full of bulrush, willows and cattails.

(6) The solution brought forward is to decrease maximum speed limits on the road and to undertake a full rehabilitation of the highway, and to reroute the stream through what is now existing farmland under the—under CN Rail lines—Rail line and the PTH 10A bypass, as well as through several hundred metres of an existing slough into the Swan River.

(7) Numerous meetings held with Swan Valley West and Town of Swan River with the provincial government have not moved forward. It was agreed in 2022 that MTI was to complete a hydraulic investigation of the capacity of PR 275 2nd Avenue ditch. The municipalities have not seen the results of this investigation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to address the much-needed rehabilitation of Provincial Road 275 to ensure public safety.

(2) To urge the provincial government to provide the results of the MTI investigation to the town and municipality, and provide immediate funding for the repairs to PR 275.

(3) To urge the provincial government to address drainage issues on PR 275 and create permanent solutions so that flooding can be avoided.

This petition is signed by Jessica Bergen, Shannon Stadnyk, Lorne Stadnyk and many, many Manitobans.

The Speaker: Just before I recognize any other members to read petitions, I would just point out to the member from Red River North that when reading the names on a petition, the accepted practice is to read the top three names, not to select different names throughout the list. So it's either the top three names or no names.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): Honourable Speaker, I just want to give leave to the—have to read the petition for the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

The Speaker: Does the honourable member for Turtle Mountain have leave to read the petition in the name of the honourable member for Steinbach?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

An Honourable Member: Absolutely not.

The Speaker: The honourable member does not have leave.

No other petitions today?

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Can you please call BITSA for—resuming second reading debate on BITSA?

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will now resume second reading debate on Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, and the debate is standing in the name of the honourable member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux), who has 16 minutes remaining.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Sorry. On house business, continued. I apologize.

The Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on government business, continued.

Point of Order

The Speaker: The honourable Opposition House Leader on a point of order.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): That part of our agenda has concluded today, I believe.

The Speaker: I do not believe the Opposition House Leader has a point of order. We haven't actually started debate on that bill, so I believe that the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) can continue with what she wanted to say.

Mr. Johnson: Respectfully, I would like to challenge that decision.

The Speaker: This—as per our rules you cannot challenge the Speaker on a ruling on a point of order.

So order, please. Order, please. Order. Order.

I'm not sure the member heard me because he was busy speaking at the time while I was trying to give a ruling. But he does not have the opportunity to challenge the Speaker on a ruling on a point of order.

* * *

The Speaker: Therefore, we will return to the Government House Leader.

MLA Fontaine: I apologize for my earlier omission.

Can you please call for resume debate on BITSA, and should BITSA pass second reading, can you please call for second reading debate on Bill 38?

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will resume second reading debate on Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, and if we conclude that, then we will resume debate on Bill 38, the act respecting Child and Family Services, Indigenous jurisdiction and other amendments.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 37—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024

The Speaker: So now we will resume debate on second reading of Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024.

The debate stands in the name of the honourable member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux), who has 16 minutes remaining.

Is there leave to allow the debate to remain standing in the honourable member for Tyndall Park's name?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: I hear a no.

So with that, then, the honourable member for Tyndall Park will not be allowed to speak.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): I would ask that people reconsider. I think we all know that the member is due soon, and I would ask that we really reconsider if there's leave for the minutes to remain standing in that member.

The Speaker: So, to be clear, is the member—the Opposition House Leader's asking for leave to reverse the earlier decision and allow the debate to remain standing in the member for Tyndall Park's name, who has 16 minutes remaining.

Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

So the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): I'm so glad to be able now to stand up and actually put some words on the record since I wasn't able to do the petition for colleague from Steinbach. This has been great opportunity to put a—like, again, to talk about the BITSA bill, Bill 37.

When it comes to the NDP putting everything into one bill and not allowing the whole process when it comes to debates on certain bills instead of having individual bills go through the process of, you know, first reading, second reading, going to committee and then finally third reading and going through concurrence and basically royal assent.

So the process here is basically they're going—they're basically doing a shortcut to put a lot of bills together. And, again, this is not what it should be for when it comes to the public, especially when they went to—they went door knocking and got the—tried to get the support of many Manitobans who thought that, you know what, they basically broke their promises when they come to transparency.

And the thing is, when it comes to transparency here, they basically are throwing a whole bunch of bills into one, and, again, we as a government, back in the PC days, we actually made it more fair when it comes to school property taxes. Now they're going to

be lumping this altogether here without debate. I think for, like, labour bills there is, like, again, there's a shortcut to put it all into one. And I think they've really fooled Manitobans.

Manitobans want to be heard. They want to have the opportunity to come to committee to talk about 'specific' bills.

* (15:40)

And what this NDP government has done, they snuck everything into one BITSA bill and that's hard for a lot of Manitobans to absorb. Basically, to—unable to speak and not able to express themselves of what this NDP government's agenda is.

We know what the dark days of the NDP Selinger government, Honourable Speaker. I remember the days when they had the vote tax. We abolished that vote tax, but now they're going to be putting that vote tax back in.

I believe that if you're going to believe in and—elections, I believe that you should raising your money and be able to actually support yourself. And the vote tax, again, why should taxpayers have to pay for this, this type of tax that is—*[interjection]* Yes, it's not fair for Manitobans, I believe, in this case, Honourable Speaker.

And then when it comes to, you know, the fuel tax, you know, they're also being able to end that tax anytime they want now. Because the fact is, again, they promised Manitobans about the fuel tax, they know they—you know, it's kind of ironic that they had this fuel tax holiday but they raise it on the other end when it comes to carbon tax; they don't fight for Manitobans when it comes to the carbon tax. And again, they throw it all into the BITSA bill so they have a better chance to go and be able to eliminate that fuel tax—or put that tax back on, that 14 cents.

So these are the really—concerns that Manitobans have when it comes to this BITSA bill.

And, like I said, I been the Speaker, I was interim Speaker back in the day, and I was the Deputy Speaker. I was also Chair of the committees and a lot of times, when we had these committee meetings, we had opportunities with some bills. We had more committee—members to speak on that committee. We had a lot of presenters and some nights, I remember there was one bill that we had probably two weeks of presenters and the ride-share program.

And so this gives a chance for industries, special-interest groups, to come in and talk about what—how

it's going to impact their lives in—as Manitoba taxpayers, residents of Manitoba. And the process of having certain bills, individual bills, being able to focus on that allows presenters to come into these committee rooms and be able to present.

We've learnt a lot of things about these committee rooms and—over the years, and a lot of people had expressed their concerns. Sometimes they also brought in good information when it came to what the bill was all about.

But, again, with this BITSA bill, again, this doesn't give an opportunity for presenters to come in, to debate on specific parts of this bill, that the omnibus bill that they are full into putting all to one bill which is, again, it's really trying to fool Manitobans and putting all into one.

They're also going to water down the Public Utilities Board, and we know—again, I like giving history lessons. I love history and I love when it comes to the histories of the Selinger government. You know, I remember first coming into this Legislature, and I remember the—what they—now watering down the Public Utilities Board so they have more controls. What they did was they basically doubled the debt for Manitoba Hydro. They increased rates—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would ask the member to keep his comments relevant to the bill we're debating today. Thank you.

Mr. Piwniuk: Honourable Speaker, again, that again—this is the importance of this BITSA bill. It is the public utility watering down and the impact of what can—the future of Manitoba Hydro is. So I was trying to give a history lesson of what the—how they almost doubled the debt, of Manitoba Hydro.

So this BITSA bill, again, it's allowing them to put all this information into one bill, and it's really concerning. It's not allowing Manitobans to come and to present at bill committees. And so the fact is this is what's really concerning right now.

And, you know, again, they're also, this whole thing when it comes to property taxes, too. They are subsidizing themselves as when it comes to, you know, raising taxes on school—property taxes on school education taxes. And we were basically trying to eliminate that, to make more of a fair—when it comes to how we finance education, Honourable Deputy—Honourable Speaker.

And it's important that Manitobans do have a say when it comes to individual bills. And again, they've

put all this into the BITSA bill and ramming it to—through the 'amniabus' bill full—and untested measures.

They are feathering their own nests with future subsidies to the NDP as Manitoba expenses. They are removing transparency and accountability of Manitoba Hydro and watering down powers of the public utility. Hydro will no longer be accountable to Manitobans for hydro's debt, deficits and borrowing plans. This will lead to higher hydro rates, I believe, Honourable Deputy—Honourable Speaker.

And this is why it's so important that Manitobans have an opportunity to really see what the NDP is focusing on here. They're really wanting to make sure that they're ramming through all this in one BITSA bill.

And the concerns are, too, that they know they spent—they promised Manitobans \$3 billion worth of promises. And they've already spent a lot of their money and the—like, we gave them actually—Honourable Speaker, we gave them a surplus. We—from last fiscal year. And now this year, they're blaming some of that on us. They've already spent that money. So—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

I would call the government bench to order, please. Order.

The member from Riding Mountain will come to order as well.

Mr. Piwniuk: Like I said, you know, we did give them a surplus in 2022-2023 fiscal year, and now they're basically—spent a lot. They made a lot of promises to their—to—during the election, and now they're spending \$2 billion more in the last fiscal year.

So they have to prove it that—so this is what they were spending their money on. So we gave them a surplus in the last fiscal year. We also had a surplus in 2020. And, Honourable Speaker, when it came to the Selinger years, I don't think they had even close to even balancing their budgets.

And so when it comes to—I always say, Honourable Speaker, when it comes to history, history doesn't repeat itself but does rhyme when it comes to politics. And it also rhymes when it comes to the NDP.

You know, they've actually overspent many years during the Selinger government, and, you know, they—my mother-in-law used to always say, the road to hell is good with—paved with good intentions. And I really feel that they tell Manitobans that they have good in-

tentions. Meanwhile, we know that when it comes to the old NDP, it will all come through, Honourable Speaker. And when it comes to spending, setting all this up to—we used to nickname the spending NDP, and it really matched their—how they spent back in the past.

And when we came into government, we inherited a billion-dollar deficit. And the fact is within four years, we've actually balanced our budget in 2020. Unfortunately, we had a—COVID-19 came, and basically it impacted Manitoba—a pandemic. I can't imagine how the economy would've been or how our finances would've been if it was an NDP government at that time.

And, again, we listened to Manitobans, and we, you know, made sure that, especially when it comes to businesses, they really wanted to make sure that when it came to, you know, with property taxes, that everybody paid—had their fair share. And basically financing education be no—should be no different than financing health care.

Why should farmers, who actually have huge amounts of land, having to pay huge amount of property taxes—this was a way to really make it more fair to finance education, Honourable Speaker. I have farmers who actually pay so much property taxes that they can actually send their kids to private schools in Europe for what they pay in property taxes. *[interjection]* It is, it's true. When you have tens of thousands of—like, when you have 10,000 acres, there's—*[interjection]* Yes. I guess I—it struck a nerve here.

The Speaker: Order, please.

The government bench will calm themselves and come to order.

Mr. Piwniuk: Well, I guess the government bench, I guess they don't like to hear the truth out there.

* (15:50)

So when it comes to finances, well, you know what? Honourable Speaker, you know what? We basically, again, balanced the budget twice in our seven years, but we also had went through a pandemic.

And this is where this BITSA bill is really concerning right now. This is going to allow them to be—to spend 'fiverously' and making sure that their friends are protected—are going to be benefitting from higher wages when it comes to unionized jobs. Again, there's only 13 per cent of Manitobans who are in a union. Their bills that they're going to shove into the labour bills, into this BITSA bill, it's very concerning.

I have good connections with the business community, and they're really concerned about the way that the—in the budget of this past year. Join a union and become a middle class. That is very concerning to our business community. And you know what, that really struck a nerve when it comes to the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine), when I'm actually talking on behalf of businesses in Manitoba.

And the thing is, Honourable Speaker, we had opportunity right now. I drive around and when it comes to the tax system here, when this BITSA bill—you know, right now they're making sure that they throw in the labour bills that are part of this, where the—you know, it doesn't have an opportunity for an employee to not have a choice when it comes to joining a union or not. That is really concerning to a lot of employers. That's concerning to a lot of employees out there.

I come from the private sector. I come from a sector that actually looked after employees. I had retention in my business that I had made sure that people—I had people who were with me almost the whole time I was in business, and we had very low turnover rate. But because we looked after them.

And this is why I believe that, by throwing this in here, it really makes it concerning to a lot of businesses, Honourable Speaker, when this BITSA bill is throwing in a bunch of labour laws, that's really concerning to our business community.

And, again, the subsidy for their own party. I remember, when we came in, they—this—the vote tax. This was—it was millions of dollars that a political party would have received because the taxpayer, they—there would be such an amount of debt tax, amount of votes that are out there. And that's very concerning when it comes to—why should taxpayer have to pay that? We believe that you raise the money in your own party and it was important—

An Honourable Member: Where's Obby? You should be talking to Obby about that.

Mr. Piwniuk: You know—I was wondering that, Honourable Speaker, when the member from St. Johns is asking if—well, who's in the House or who's not, and I think that's against the rules here.

And again, Honourable Speaker—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would ask the front bench of the government to please come to order.

Mr. Piwniuk: Again, you know, when it comes to raising taxes on property you—taxes on properties, when it comes to raising school taxes, again this is concerning when it comes to this BITSA bill, Honourable Speaker.

Again, I—when it comes to rural Manitoba, we pay so much, especially our farmers, our businesses. We pay a lot of money into educational taxes, and the fact is, nowadays—I remember growing up in a farm. We had four kids on—per family. Nowadays, even big farmers, they only have 1.5 kids now, still, as the average Canadian family has that many kids born in, per family. And when it comes to the amount of taxes that a farmer will pay in rural Manitoba, it's very concerning to—for them.

You know, right now, the weather's changing all the time. It's not always predictable what kind of weather we're going to have. We have drought, we have excess amount of rain, we've had it all, 'inspecially' in these last five years. We saw farmers struggling to making sure that they get their crops off. We're lucky we had a good fall this year, because we had a late spring, a spring that took a while for it to harvest—to seed fields and thank God we didn't have an early frost, because the farmers, I think, are now going to have a very good crop this year. But the fact is, they pay a lot of money when it comes to property taxes.

And in this BITSA bill, it does alter the amount of the reduction of the amount of taxes that a farmer's going to pay now.

The concern that we have also too with this BITSA bill when taking the—not allowing the education tax credits to be rebated, I'm concerned about doctors. I come from rural Manitoba. To attract a doctor, especially in a small town like Melita or Deloraine, we have to be competitive. In this BITSA bill, it's not allowing us to be competitive. We're going to be allowing the NDP to raise taxes and not making it competitive for doctors to actually have less taxes to pay here.

When it comes to income tax, reducing the personal exemptions of anybody that makes over \$200,000, that's your doctors in this province, Honourable Speaker. And this BITSA bill is not transparent. It doesn't allow the presenters, who are concerned about this bill, who's going to be affected on a daily basis, to come and present. And I think it's very important that Manitobans have an opportunity to come to committee meetings, to make sure that their voices are heard.

You know, the—I know the—when the NDP were in opposition, they made sure that presenters were keen on the bills that they were concerned about that we were passing. And now they don't—are not—in this case, people who have concerns about their bill—certain bills, especially labour bills, we do not have employers that have the opportunity to express their concerns, aware the direction that this NDP is taking us.

And when it came to the budget, saying that, join a union and be part of the middle class. That was concerning to a lot of business people that were out there and investment that comes to this province, Honourable Speaker. Because there should be a voice when it comes to allowing the industries out there, the business community, to come to the committee meetings, to talk about some of these labour issues that are being rammed into this BITSA bill, and that is very concerning to the people that I talk to. The people that actually employ a lot of people in this province, who participate in the tax revenues that this province gets.

And if this is the case, it's so easy for a company to pick up and go somewhere where there's more competitiveness when it comes to the tax treatments. We have to compete with Saskatchewan. We got to compete with Saskatchewan when it comes to our tax bases, when it comes to attracting doctors, attracting investments, and that's really concerning.

And the fact is, right now, when it comes to property taxes in this BITSA bill, they're eligible to reduce the amount of taxes that—rebates that we actually accomplished, allowing individuals, residents, to get 50 per cent back on the rebates of the educational taxes. And I feel that's—it's very concerning for residential individuals that actually have rental properties, and that's going to increase their rates. They will have no other choice to pass it on to the consumer.

And at the end of the day, that is where we're more concerned about, is also the people who have less fortunate. Like the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) who has said in his question that the concern of this—even this vote, this tax holiday for gas, for 14 cents. It really doesn't really affect people who don't have a vehicle. They are not the ones that benefit, and they're so into this carbon—trying to have this carbon tax. So by reducing the taxes of PST, it's sort of defending what they believe in when it comes to the carbon tax. So it's like a washout when it comes to not standing up for Canadians and Manitobans, when it comes to the Trudeau carbon tax.

That's really concerning right now, is that the fact is, any day now, when they feel that they're going to be more of a debt as they go—move on, the fact is they can reduce at—in this BITSA bill, they can put back on that tax, that 14 cents per litre on gasoline, at any time. And that's going to be one of the highest tax increases in Manitoba history when it comes to them putting it back on.

And that's a concern that a lot of Manitobans have right now. And I think right now, for the fortunate, when we did our—the tax rates for individuals, for people who are making a low income, we've put more and more people off the tax rate because the fact is we increase the personal exemption of all individuals in the province. We also have increased our tax brackets, so individuals who are making lower incomes were totally off of having to pay taxes off on the tax row.

And that was a big opportunity for people who had low incomes to keep more money on the table, Honourable Speaker.

* (16:00)

And with this other tax, this tax holiday for gasoline, it's not really impacting the benefit of a lot of poorer people who don't have a vehicle. Or, if they do, they have more efficient vehicle, which they don't drive very far. They may live in their own community and really, it's not really saving them a lot of money.

What we did, Honourable Speaker, we basically made sure that they had more money in their pockets. And my concern right now with this BITSA bill, the way that the NDP is going to increase taxes at any time, water down Manitoba Hydro, the PUB, when it comes to the rate increases on Manitoba Hydro, they'll have more control in trying to raise rates on hydro. They're going to put Hydro into more of a deficit like they did before, and losing money.

And, of course, they doubled the debt. Not only did they double the debt for Manitoba Hydro in the Selinger days, but they also doubled the debt of Manitoba debt, Honourable Speaker. And the fact is, I feel that with where they're going on this direction, on this BITSA bill, that this is what their intent is, is fulfilling all their promises during the last election and putting this bill into place so that they can actually start raising taxes and increasing the—this unfair playing field when it comes to our taxation system with other provinces.

Attracting investment, attracting employees. You know, back in the days of the NDP government—of Selinger government—we had a mass exodus of young

people moving to other provinces. We had immigrants coming into this province, Honourable Speaker, and the concern that they had when we—just before we formed government, was they were concerned that their children who were growing up in this area had to find jobs and better opportunity in other provinces like Saskatchewan and Alberta.

And, like I said, when I was actually in, you know, I'm—this BITSA bill can also be an opportunity to start, the opportunity to raise taxes and the PST. When Selinger government went knocking on the doors of Manitobans for their vote in 2011, they promised that they would not raise the PST. And they did, right after the election, Honourable Speaker.

And that really impacted, especially border towns that I have to represent in the U.S. border and also on Saskatchewan border, especially the town of Virden. When I used to represent Virden back in the day, we had people going to Saskatchewan for services, and we saw a growth; like I said before in another presentation, how Saskatchewan grew faster than Manitoba.

This is the BITSA bill is what's going to be concerning to a lot of business owners, especially in my western region. They're concerned about—the fact is that they could move elsewhere, and they're concerned that the amount of taxes, the hidden taxes, the hidden policies of the labour bills going into this bill, it's very concerning to the people in the southwestern region of Manitoba here.

We do have an oil patch that we have that provides a lot of jobs, a lot of revenue for this province. And my concern right now is, if they—if there's no transparency in this BITSA bill, this is what's going to happen is that the taxes are going to be increased, more taxes coming from our neck of the woods and less investment, especially when it comes to infrastructure, that we saw in the Selinger government.

And the reason why I'm here today is because the fact is, we did not get our fair share in the western region. And I'm—always been a voice for my constituency and for people that have to deal with this BITSA bill here. I am here for my constituents and I want to make sure that I will fight for them any possible time I get here to make sure that when it comes to labour, we have a lot.

Like, I had opportunity to travel the whole summer in Turtle Mountain, meeting up with manufacturers in my constituency and talking and listening to them. And the concern was always about the labour laws and making sure that they're competitive when it comes to

doing business in Manitoba. I got a company called PhiBer. They do manufacturing for farm equipment, for machinery for dairy farms. They send their products all over the world, and the fact is, when it comes to labour, when it comes to be competitive, they do have business 'outuity' in the—Iowa—Des Moines, Iowa, area, and they're wanting to bring that all into one area. And I'm really concerned that with the disadvantages of this BITSA bill, they may think twice of bringing those jobs to this province.

And that's why it's so important that I'm in this Legislature to make sure that the labour laws are going to be allowed; the manufacturers, the business community to thrive and not to be restricted, and not feel that they have a disadvantage. And I do not want them to relocate.

It's important because the fact is, a town like Crystal City, which PhiBer is actually located at, I'm really concerned that if there's a disadvantage of labour when it comes to property taxes, rebates on the—or, their equip—on their properties, on their—like, when, on their building, they may look at going south of the border.

We have an opportunity to build that economy in that southwest corner, but we want to make sure that things don't get slid into bills like this that would make it disadvantaged for a company like PhiBer to expand, to grow.

And one of the things that they have, I was just at the citizenship road—ceremonies in the Peace Garden at Turtle Mountain, and one of the employees, who was actually—her family was honoured at, again, there was a citizenship ceremony; she worked at PhiBer. So it was nice to catch up with her from the—after the ceremony on July 1, to talk about, you know, the opportunities that she had in the community of Crystal City, working for the good company that needs to be competitive; to say that they—because again, they're competing with worldwide when it comes to competition out there.

And they have a good product. They have a good workforce. They just want to make sure that they look after their workforce. They know the importance. But as long as it doesn't cause some of these problems with the labour component in the BITSA bill, does not allow them to have a voice when it comes to coming to committee meetings.

If something is going to impact their company, they want to know that they can come to this Legislature to voice their concerns when it comes to

some labour bills that are going forward here, Honourable Speaker. And, again, I'm their voice. I'm here to represent that area.

There's a lot of manufacturers in the area, and one of the other bigger manufacturers is the feed mill that—HyLife. I know the HyLife plant is in Neepawa, but it employs a lot of people in their plant in Killarney, and the hog operations that they have here.

And I'm also concerned about, too, the environments, when it comes to throwing environmental bills in there. I remember the NDP, the Selinger government basically put a moratorium on the hog industry. It really impacted HyLife. Killarney would not be the size they were if we didn't take that moratorium off. Because I believe that that industry, the hog industry, is so well regulated, especially when it comes to the spreading of waste into, injecting it into the soil for a natural fertilizer.

So, Honourable Speaker, I just had my great opportunity to speak for the last half hour, and thank you very much.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): It's certainly my—*[interjection]* It's my pleasure to get up today and put a few words on the record on the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act. And today I'm going to talk a little bit about a bill that's embedded into this act, The Environment Amendment Act.

But first I want to read something to you. Here's a quote I want to read. It says, dumping them into BITSA bills where the public doesn't have a say on them, and where MLAs are forced to vote on the myriad of legislative changes in a single piece of legislation is wrong. That's not how laws should be made. The public deserves better, and should have input.

Now, who said that? Any guesses? Your friend, Tom Brodbeck from the Winnipeg Free Press, said that. So Tom gets where it's at here, that bills are in BITSA that shouldn't be in BITSA, and The Environment Amendment Act is one of those bills, Honourable Speaker.

This bill obviously came about as a direct result of the '23 and '24 Fort Garry Bridge sewage spills. The first pipe burst on November 30, 2023, and the second on February 7, 2024.

* (16:10)

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change (MLA Schmidt) announced these legislative changes March 6 by press release several months later and

after 230 million litres of raw sewage was spewed into the Red River and Lake Winnipeg watershed. The minister also announced \$10 million in funding towards the unknown cost of repairs and a \$96-million project the City of Winnipeg has planned to build a backup pipe beginning in 2026.

However, the minister didn't speak out publicly on this bill for two weeks after the February incident, and the much larger of the two spills made national news. Now, Honourable Speaker, that's not why Manitoba wants to be on the national news. Total disgrace that this had to happen.

So the minister's silence and delays were condemned by Treaty 1 nations around Lake Winnipeg who said they were never notified, even though they were engaged in conversations with the minister about other matters while this environmental catastrophe was unfolding. In quotations, she seemed unaware, is what Treaty 1 nations chairperson Gordon Bluesky, the chief of Brokenhead Ojibway Nation said on windspeaker.com. I quote: What's their notification process, because I never received anything, and I'm potentially the most impacted community seeing that the water literally goes by my First Nation and in my backyard. So, again, I don't know why there is no process established, but it's a bit shocking, said Bluesky.

So subsequently, eight First Nations are now suing this provincial NDP government for \$4.8 billion for breaches of their Charter rights and punitive damages resulting from these spills.

To make matters more scandalous, a city of Winnipeg councillor has even called on the Province to fine the City \$1 billion. On March 14, the NDP member for Riel (MLA Moyes) told this House during a debate on these very issues that he's proud of this kind of response by his NDP government. We believe Manitobans strongly disagree and have plenty to say about the minister's inaction in these changes, or lack thereof, being rammed through in this omnibus bill.

The amendments to the environmental act aren't even aligned with the minister's public comments on the record about this topic. On March 6, the day she announced these amendments by press release, the minister told the Winnipeg Free Press that, and I quote, there is no requirement in The Environment Act for licensed authorities to tell affected communities there has been a severe incident. The minister said, we've certainly heard these concerns from Manitobans and from municipalities and First Nations downstream.

Surely the minister doesn't need legislation to give Treaty 1 nations the courtesy of a phone call or to municipalities throughout the region that were affected.

And, Honourable Speaker, to make things worse, there are no new provisions in these legislative amendments requiring that affected communities be notified of severe incidents upstream of their communities.

So, Honourable Speaker, I ask, this all came out very publicly in March. There was plenty of time to put a separate bill in place in the spring, have it passed through the Legislature by June. But, no, let's wait and put it into BITSA. Not sure why. That's what we're asking today.

Although there are a few changes being made to The Environment Act, they are really not consequential and are a direct result of the Fort Garry Bridge sewage spill. The City of Winnipeg, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, industry, business, farmers and other stakeholders want to have input on any new powers being doled out under The Environment Act, and to comment on what penalties might be suggested by the minister.

These people, these organizations, should be able to appear and present at public committees. The minister has a statutory responsibility for convening public hearings under The Environment Act. So she should not refuse this call and she should bring a bill to committee, not hide this bill in an 'ominous' bill like BITSA.

It should be noted, Honourable Speaker, that the last time there was a significant sewage spill into the Red River of this magnitude was in 2002. A failure at the North End treatment plant spilled 427 million litres of untreated sewage into the river. This also happened under an NDP government. And there was a Clean Environment Commission hearing after much NDP hand-wringing and delays.

When the Clean Environment Commission was finally allowed to do its job, the NDP ignored their warnings and failed to take action to upgrade the North End treatment plant. The NDP ignored the CEC in 2002 and they are ignoring the CEC today.

Now the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (MLA Schmidt) says, and I quote, water is life. But this bill does nothing to protect water. In fact, the minister hasn't allocated a single dollar more to Environmental Stewardship in Budget 2024. She is spending less on water stewardship initiatives and less on the Clean Environment Commission.

This is to say nothing of her colleague, the NDP Infrastructure Minister, who slashed the capital budget for water infrastructure by \$105 million in Budget 2024. Meanwhile, another 21 million litres of sewage was spilled from the Fort Garry Bridge after a heavy day of rain in recent weeks.

Manitobans have a lot of unanswered questions about this bill, this NDP government's response and this legislation. That's why this minister needs to withdraw this bill out of BITSA, put it forward as a regular bill, allow it to go to public committee. This minister needs to stop neglecting her duties to protect the environment and take the steps today to allow the public to comment on any changes she intends to make.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to speak on this BITSA bill. I—it's my first opportunity to speak on a bill such as this. So today I rise to speak on Bill 37, a bill that, at its core, holds far-reaching consequences for the financial future of this province.

On the surface, Bill 37 may seem like just another budget implementation tool, a mechanism to solidify the government's fiscal strategy. But upon closer examination, it raises serious concerns. Serious concerns that I've heard from my constituents about the impact on our economy, public services and the well-being of everyday Manitobans.

My argument is simple: Bill 37 is not in the best interest of Manitobans. The provisions of this legislation favour short-term fiscal appearances—thank you—at the expense of long-term prosperity, sustainable public services and financial stability of our most vulnerable citizens.

And again, I spoke the other day—when we talk about vulnerable citizens, when I look at things like crime and I look in my own community of Portage la Prairie, when a pizza driver was robbed not of his money but of his pizza; in a country like this, in a province like this, people should not be starving out there.

I will outline several reasons why this bill is problematic, how it could harm Manitoba's economic health, and why it reflects a vision of government—governance that prioritizes tax cuts and reduced spending over investments in our community and, most importantly, our people.

Let's take some time to delve into the reasons why this bill is not a good idea for Manitobans and why we need to be cautious, cautious, cautious on the implementation.

One of the central features of Bill 37 is the reduction in government revenues through tax cuts. While tax relief can sometimes be beneficial, it is often very short term. This leaves us with a critical question: Where will a lost revenue be made up?

* (16:20)

In practice, significant tax cuts often force governments to slash public services to balance the books. Manitoba's economy and infrastructure is still recovering from the impacts of the pandemic. And the pressures being felt across Canada are further straining our household budgets, and we don't need to look any further on that to see the damage and the impact that the federal carbon tax is having right now.

Now is not the time to reduce the very revenue that funds essential services, like health care, like education and like social programs. I've talked many times, Honourable Speaker, about the project that we're doing in Portage la Prairie, the new health-care facility that is one of the largest infrastructure projects in Canada. There's been a number of questions about: How are we going to service this hospital? Who are the people that are going to work there?

Well, I'll tell you what; it's going to be Manitobans that want to work there. It's going to be Manitobans that want to come back to Portage la Prairie. It's Manitobans that are wanting to work in new facilities like this hospital. But we also must provide the tools for our doctors, and our doctors have spoken in April of this year, when they said that we would be doing a disservice to our community if we were not putting an MRI in.

So again, let's not let this bill cut out special services like that, where we can actually help reduce the cost on health care by being able to detect things like cancers when they're the size of a pea, at a stage 1 instead of a stage 4. When we're having to look after people, they're going to have to go through some very invasive cancer treatments. They're going to spend lots of time in hospitals. Why would we want to do that?

Our province's most vulnerable residents, our low-income families, our seniors and our people with disabilities are the ones who will feel the sharpest impact of these cuts. Just like the gentleman I spoke about today from Sandy Bay First Nation that has an MRI

appointment at seven o'clock in the morning but he doesn't have a driver's licence or a vehicle to get there. Is he supposed to miss his appointment or how is he going to get there? How is he going to afford that appointment?

While Bill 37 may seem like a gift to taxpayers on paper, it's important to recognize that reduced revenue leads to weaker public services, which are critical lifelines for many, many Manitobans. We must ask ourselves: Is this really the time to forgo essential revenues when our communities are in such dire need?

I'm so glad that I have the opportunity to be able to speak on behalf of all Manitobans, because I think that it's important that we put politics aside and look at the people, and look how they will be affected by things like this BITSA bill. And again, it's going to be those people that are most in need—excuse me, Honourable Speaker.

We think about the people, again, when we think about examples and how those people—I think about the people in the North when I think about this BITSA bill, and think about how do they get proper health care? How do they get to the health-care facilities? How do they even do that?

Well, I know of an infrastructure project that's being built in Portage la Prairie that's only five kilometres away from a runway, so that's one way that we could look at it. Again, I can't state this enough: Is this really the time to forgo a central revenue when our communities are so much in need?

Number 2: Underfunding of the public service is a recipe—an absolute recipe—for disaster. The reduction in revenue streams will 'invariably' in—will lead to scaling back of public services, which are already under immense strain. We've heard of issues that we're dealing with right now when it comes to the issues with needles.

You know, it's not that many years ago—and again, when I think about, again, my own community and being part of the Bear Clan Patrol in Portage la Prairie, I never ever for once in my life ever thought that I would find a needle in my old neighbourhood where I grew up in Portage la Prairie. And, wow, did I get a wake-up call.

This is not the time when we shouldn't be helping out some of these most vulnerable people. But we also need to help our police officers out there as well, too. And we can't continue to be—for them to be having to react to a picture of an Amazon driver or of a mail carrier or of a person that's delivering something

because people are so scared to be out of their homes, and it's that—for that reason that underfunding public services is a real recipe for disaster.

Manitoba's health-care system has been grappling with chronic underfunding for years. And we all know that the COVID pandemic exposed serious weaknesses in our health-care infrastructure. Our hospitals, long-term-care homes, mental health services are still working to recover from these challenges. What happens when funding is further reduced because of these tax cuts?

Again, I'd like to give an example of the Lions Prairie Manor in Portage la Prairie, where my mom spent her final days. I had a call this year from a family member of a person that's in the Lions Prairie Manor that the air conditioning was broke. And the comment that come back to them was: maybe we could put a cold cloth around their neck or maybe we could move them to another part of the facility. That's—our seniors have given so much to our country and our province. It—now is not the time to be looking at funding cuts for things like personal-care homes.

I want to take this chance to thank the previous PC government for doing work with the health care that they did—with starting that new hospital in Neepawa, with the addition that's going on in Boundary Trails—

An Honourable Member: CT scanner.

MLA Bereza: And, again, the CT scanner that the member from Swan River started and worked on for 12 years, I think it was. A man that never gives up.

Again, we have to keep doing that. To the massive hospital in the Portage health region. And, again, to think about that, we can't make cuts here. It's so important that we have everybody involved in some of these—

An Honourable Member: Order.

MLA Bereza: I'm—I thought that was you, Honourable Speaker. Was that you speaking to me?

An Honourable Member: It's all you, Jeff.

An Honourable Member: You're hearing voices. He's hearing voices.

MLA Bereza: Oh. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The one thing, again—you know, when we look at these health-care facilities, there was so much time put into the local hospital in Portage la Prairie. There was

so much forethought being put into there when it come to Indigenous input into that as well, too.

An Honourable Member: No MRI.

MLA Bereza: And, again, it's going to—

An Honourable Member: And yet, no MRI. The story is curious.

MLA Bereza: Well, we are—you know, I want to thank the Health Minister for bringing that up, because, again, I was accused of circling places on a map of where the MRI was supposed to go, but on that—on actually the picture of that, it showed for future diagnostic and lab. I will table it tomorrow, if you like. Our hospitals, long-term-care homes and mental health services are still working to recover from these challenges.

* (16:30)

I would like to, again, because the Health Minister keeps trying to speak me down here again—I would like to, in front of all the people listening here: Please come and join us on October 22, so you can talk about the things that supposedly I have misled the public upon. I wait to hear that. Please come out and join us.

The provincial government has indicated that Bill 37 will be followed by reductions in government spending and I ask: Which services will be cut? Where are they? Where will they be cut? When will they be cut? Will it be health care? It seems so, because there's a gift on the table for \$5 million that this government doesn't want to accept today. And that's not misleading.

The provincial government has indicated that Bill 37 will be followed by reductions in government spending and I ask: Which services are going to be cut? Is there more than 24,000 people that will be waiting for an MRI after this BITSA bill passes? Will it be health care, education or social services? None of these areas can afford further cuts without significantly impacting the quality of life for Manitobans.

As we—*[interjection]*—excuse me. As we see the increase in wait times in hospitals, teacher shortages in school and inadequate mental health resources, cutting more from these critical areas will not serve our province well.

Moreover, underfunding education is a direct hit to our future. When I look at the amount of kids—and both of my daughters—

An Honourable Member: Why did he look at me when he said that?

MLA Bereza: Because you're the—my apologies.

What's—moreover, under—and again, I want to state that my—both of my daughters are involved in the education field. And I don't want to mislead anybody; one is a social worker and one is a teacher. And the thing that I hear all the time are there is not enough room for these kids to learn. There's no place for them to have their lunches even, because they're in the hallways. And this is in a small community in Manitoba. When we see the impact of what's going on with the education system in the city, it is unfathomable.

Moreover, underfunding education is a direct hit to our future. When we cut back on education, we are undermining the prospects of the next generation. Are the next generation, under this BITSA bill, going to have the proper education so that they can be the leaders in our country, or are they going to be left like the people that are sitting in the places like the Lions Prairie Manor to put a cold cloth around their neck? We need to make sure that we're looking after the youth that's coming up behind us.

This, in turn, can lead to a long-term negative consequences for Manitoba's economy, as an uneducated or undereducated workforce is less competitive in the globalized world. Shift burdens onto the municipalities. Bill 37 contains provisions that could offload financial responsibilities onto municipalities. It is important that municipalities should have a say in what goes into this BITSA bill instead of it being rammed down their throat.

I had the opportunity to be on city council and again, it's a tough road and they need to know what the Province is going to be giving them or not giving them, so they can prepare.

There is only one taxpayer in this province, in that—in this country, and it is us. Bill 37, we must recognize that municipalities are already operating under tight, tight fiscal constraints. If the provincial government cuts funding, or reduces transfers to municipalities, cities and towns across Manitoba, Manitoba will be forced to raise property taxes or cut local services such as—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I realize it's getting a little late in the day, but I would ask the government bench to please exercise some restraint.

MLA Bereza: I—*[interjection]* I appreciate the government bench listening—that's what we wanted, we wanted under this—while we're speaking today, to be

heard. Thank you so much. I appreciate for you hearing me today on this BITSA bill. It's important that you hear that.

Manitobans will be forced to either raise property taxes or cut local services, such as infrastructure maintenance—please say no. They cannot cut infrastructure any more. It cannot be cut.

Public transit and recreational programs. We know that municipalities are the front line of service delivery for Manitobans. When provincial support is reduced, it is local governments that must pick up the slack. We could see a future where roads go unrepaired, community centres close down.

I can't imagine that when I think of our own Stride Place in Portage la Prairie, the crown jewel of recreation in Manitoba. The amount of—the amount that it feeds into the economy, please tell me you're not going to close down recreation facilities. Please tell me that. For rural communities, this could be even more damaging often as they have smaller tax bases to rely on.

Number 4: the impact on the most vulnerable. As many—as mentioned earlier, Bill 37 includes provisions that will disproportionately impact low- and middle-income Manitobans. I don't think we have to look any further than the grocery store. Has anybody been to the grocery store lately and tried to buy a pork chop? I can't even afford a pork chop anymore.

I used to be able to buy a steak once in a while. Not even a pork chop I can afford anymore. And part of that is because this government wants to continue to support the carbon tax and what that's costing us. While there are some tax breaks built into the bill—*[interjection]* I'm okay. These benefits—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would ask the opposition bench to come to order, particularly when one of your own members is trying to speak.

MLA Bereza: While there are some tax breaks built into this bill, these benefits are not evenly distributed, not even a little bit.

Consider the individuals and families who are already struggling to make ends meet. That's the people that don't benefit one thin dime from the cut in the gas tax. Not one thin dime are the people that have to walk to get their groceries. The people that have to be on a bicycle to get their groceries. How does that affect them in one wee bit?

* (16:40)

The rising cost of living, driven by inflation, has put pressure like we have never seen on household budgets. Now imagine that these families also face cuts to child-care services, social assistance programs, affordable housing initiatives, because of reduced government revenue.

Bill 37 focus on tax cuts, and fiscal restraint means that people who need the most support will likely receive the least. Instead of creating a more equitable Manitoba, Bill 37 may widen the gap between rich and poor, leaving many people further behind. Do we want to leave anybody further behind today?

Number 5: short-term gains for long-term pain. No, sorry, short-term gains, long-term consequences. The tax reductions proposed in Bill 37 may give the impression of immediate relief, but the long-term consequences will be felt and felt and felt for years to come. It could be detrimental to Manitoba's fiscal health.

When a government reduces its revenue base, it's limited its ability to respond to future economic challenges and opportunities. Did anybody on that side think about that? What is this going to do to the future of Manitoba? I ask you that.

What happens—*[interjection]*—I understand that. We—thank you for—the minister for saying that he's ready to raise taxes.

What happens when we face another economic downturn? Oh, sorry, did we think about that? Doesn't look like it.

Public health crisis. What if we have another COVID event or a natural disaster, unfortunately, like we're seeing in Florida right now; a pressure that we will never hopefully see again? With a reduced tax base, the government will have fewer resources—excuse me, Honourable Speaker.

An Honourable Member: Slow down.

MLA Bereza: I'm good. I'm good.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to have a drink. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

I've repeatedly asked members to exercise some restraint in their exuberant heckling, and I would again ask for that consideration.

MLA Bereza: With a reduced tax base, the government will have fewer resources available to address unforeseen crisis. Furthermore, we know that tax cuts often lead to increased borrowing to cover budget shortfalls.

Manitoba already carries significant debt, and further borrowing could only increase our debt-servicing costs. Bill 37 is a short-term fix for a much more complex problem. Rather than investing in sustainable solutions that will strengthen our economy and our communities over long term, this bill prioritizes significant risks down the road.

The potential impact on public sector workers. One area that often suffers under austerity measures is public sector employment. Bill 37's provision to cut government spending could mean job losses, wage freezes or reduced benefits. Public sector workers have already made significant sacrifices through the pandemic, working on the front lines to keep us safe and provide vital services. Cutting funding now would not only be a disservice to these dedicated individuals, but it could also undermine the quality of services that Manitobans receive.

When we reduce the number of nurses in our hospitals or teachers in our classrooms we all suffer consequences. Bill 37, undermining the hard work of the public sector.

Honourable members, Bill 37 presents itself as a fiscal tool to ease the burden on taxpayers, but, in fact, it's a ticking—*[interjection]* But, in fact, are you ready for this ticking time bomb that is coming your way and on the backs of Manitobans? I hope you're ready to clap at that time.

The tax cuts may provide short-term relief, but the long-term consequences will be felt for years and years to come. This legislation reflects a flawed vision of governance that prioritizes cutting tax over investing in our communities, our infrastructure and our people.

We see that in the Louise Bridge that is—*[interjection]* We should be focusing on building Manitoba, where everyone has access to high-quality services, where every child has an opportunity to succeed in school, not to operate in a hallway, not to operate in a school where the roofs—as in Brandon, where 10 roofs are needing new shingles. We're not even looking at that. That is nowhere part of this.

So where do we go? Where is the results that we're looking for in order to be looking at how we can have the next generation move 'forther'—forward for

us? Bill 37 is not the path forward for Manitoba. We can and must—we must—do better for the people of Manitoba.

When I come to sit in this Chamber, it was to look at all constituents, all of their issues. It does not matter whether it's an NDP member, a Liberal member, a red member, an orange member, a Conservative member. It's to make sure we look at this whole province.

Bill 37 is not the path forward, and we can and must do better for the people of this province. I urge my colleagues to reconsider the harmful provisions of this bill and to reject a sort—short-sighted approach that will cost Manitobans dearly in the long run.

Honourable Speaker, I also want to apologize for me speaking out loudly yesterday, and I hope that the members opposite will learn from some of those things that they've done today while speaking loudly as well, too.

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I'm not sure I can deliver my message as energetically here as my colleague, the MLA for Portage la Prairie. But nonetheless, I am pleased to stand in the House and speak to Bill 37, the BITSA bill, and put some words on the record reflecting the consequences of this bill and the disservice to the democratic process we have here in Manitoba.

This is an important topic that has stirred up much conversation and concerns right across our province, raising eyebrows and creating debates among folks and businesses.

And Manitobans have a right to know what is hidden in this bill. It's important to have these bills and legislation go through proper legislative processes and procedures, and what is hidden in this bill doesn't allow for that opportunity for Manitobans to come and speak to some of the issues that are hidden in this NDP agenda.

The government has taken an abundance of legislative changes and put it into this, and not introduced through the legislative process and practices, which is very undemocratic, and it reduces the transparency and accountability and it is full of broken promises.

We heard some very interesting comments from the member of Fort Garry, and I'll get to that in just a little bit—some of which he references as the legislation that should have been introduced as a stand-alone, where proper debate can happen and go to a standing committee.

Jamming bills or legislation into this omnibus bill eliminates, again, like I've said, the opportunity for public input. Folks here in Manitoba will not have that opportunity to ask questions, raise their concerns.

* (16:50)

And let's talk about the tax changes that are in this bill, and these are important for folks to be made aware of. Manitobans need to know that they are going to have the burden of some of these changes with this NDP government. We will continue to pay more and get less.

One bit of legislation that touches all of us here is the NDP are not—they are not—going to freeze hydro rates. But what instead? What will the NDP do? Raise the hydro rates.

Tucked away in the bill is the changes to The Fuel Tax Act. The NDP will end the fuel tax holiday, and then what will they do? Raise the fuel tax without going through, again, the legislative process—the proper legislative process, where transparency and consultation.

And that fuel tax, who does that fuel tax really help here in Manitoba? It doesn't touch the most vulnerable. It helps those people that have—you know, drive the big, fancy SUVs and have the luxury of a vehicle. There's many of our Manitobans that don't have that, so this tax-savings holiday that they claim doesn't really serve to some of our most vulnerable here in Manitoba.

Bill 37 places new tax on doctors and professors, making them pay more in income tax, as well as additional tax on their home property. How does Manitoba attract professionals when tax increase like this just won't attract growth or business? Excuse me.

The NDP has taken away assistance for small businesses, for collecting and forwarding tax revenues to the department. Changes to tax statutes could create new loopholes. That's another term that we heard most recently from the member of Fort Garry: loopholes.

More specific to the statutes—the tax statutes, it'll allow individuals or businesses to exploit the system. These loopholes, again, can lead to tax avoidance or evasion and could result in the loss of revenue for the government, which in turn affects all of us here in Manitoba.

We need—Manitobans need and deserve the opportunity to ask these questions and bring their concerns forward. These changes will create an unfavourable environment or—for investment here in

our province. It'll discourage businesses from expanding or even starting new ventures, and discourages recruitment efforts for newcomers to our province, which will lead to a negative impact both on economic growth and, of course, jobs.

With these tax regulations and changes, it becomes more stringent for industry. It can affect our competitiveness and sustainability, and it's important to assess that—the impact on different sectors and ensure the fairness.

I've made reference to a few examples highlighting the tax burden, that of which will have a negative effect on folks here in Manitoba and the consequences that we will be faced here, hurting businesses and, of course, their financial future here in Manitoba.

And, again, big concerns that individuals and groups have—or, some more concerns that groups have and industries have—are the legislative process in this BITSA bill that does not provide opportunities for public input, doesn't provide a wider range of perspective and voices, ensuring that the bill truly represents the interests of all Manitobans. The right to make your choice is a key element to democracy.

What it does represent is the fact that the NDP do not want to hear from Manitobans, but rather want to hide from public input, hide their ideological ways in legislation and look for loopholes.

There's no equity and fairness in this. It doesn't address equity in the tax system or fairness. It doesn't ensure a fair and equitable tax system, which is crucial for promoting social and economic justice.

Individuals have also expressed concerns about the potential impact of the bill on those vulnerable populations here in Manitoba. They worry that certain budgetary decisions or changes in tax regulations could permanently affect low-income earners, like I've mentioned before, families or marginalized communities. It is essential to consider the potential social implications and ensure that adequate support systems are in place to protect these populations.

And, again, like I said, it's important to engage in open dialogue and ensure that legislation achieves what it's intended to do, and—while minimizing any negative impacts.

You know, and we'll go back to the gas tax holiday and the impact that has. We were told that we were going to see, you know, a change in grocery prices. Have we seen that come forward? We have not

seen anything like that come forward, and like my colleague said, it's even hard to go and buy a pork chop at the grocery stores these days. There's—we're all faced with those financial challenges and, you know, another thing that's tucked into the back of this bill, which is really huge.

And I've talked to many in industry, I've had meetings with stakeholders, and they're concerned with the labour that is tucked away in the labour laws that are tucked in this BITSA bill. And those labour laws that are in this bill will never come to committee. And that is a concern for a lot of the stakeholders that I've seen and small business and industry.

And the elimination of public input in labour through this bill will have a negative effect on many of these industries and these businesses; and public input in these matters ensures that there is transparency and accountability in this decision making. By eliminating this input, they face—you know, businesses and industry can face criticism for lack of transparency, and that can damage their reputation and erode their trust with the public and their employees.

Again, we learned from the member from Fort Garry just—I believe it was this week—that the labour relations amendment act was changed in secrecy and it wasn't actually what was coming out in the original rollout of the bill, is what I understand. And the NDP are making substantial and significant changes to these labour laws that should be considered carefully and, you know, get consultation on making such changes.

But the NDP are not going to allow for that. Manitobans will not have the opportunity to come and speak to these changes. They are going to be banning replacement workers, with exceptions. But it's not clear if these exceptions are workable or if they're too bureaucratic, because we don't know. We don't know what that's going to look like.

We have questions about how we can be sure that this ban won't impact health, safety and the lives of those in foster care, health care, seniors care, hospital care or any other kind of care, where one's life is impacted by the employees that care for them.

Now, in reference to this bill, I just want to quote the member from Fort Garry: The previous bill that had been drafted looks very different than what actually got to the floor of this House.

Now isn't that interesting? What happened? What changed? I'm going to go on to further quote the member from Fort Garry: It was modified. We know it was modified by the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) office, and we know it was modified without the input of either Cabinet or caucus. We know that it was modified and without any discussions about that bill, either at Cabinet or caucus, and that the Premier's office drafted this bill on their own and put it forward without consultation.

And I'll go on to quote again the member from Fort Garry: So why would such an important bill like

this not be discussed openly? Why would it be changed in secret? Goes on: And what happened in this new bill is that major loophole got inserted into this bill that wasn't there before. Now that's—

* (17:00)

The Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 18 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 9, 2024

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Extended Hours Primary-Care Clinic	
Bill 39—The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act		Kennedy	2725
Wiebe	2715	Asagwara	2725
Tabling of Reports		Fuel Tax Rate	
Asagwara	2715	Wasyliw	2725
Simard	2715	Schmidt	2726
Members' Statements		Speaker's Statement	
Community Helpers Unite		Lindsey	2726
Smith	2715	Petitions	
Where the Cottonwoods Grow—Film Screening		Removal of Federal Carbon Tax	
Goertzen	2716	Johnson	2726
Acknowledging Foster Parents		Little Mountain Park	
Lamoureux	2716	Lamoureux	2727
Laurie Langrell		Breast Screening	
King	2717	Balcaen	2727
Red River Toy Library		Removal of Federal Carbon Tax	
Wasyliw	2717	Ewasko	2728
Oral Questions		Breast Screening	
Department of Families		Bereza	2729
Ewasko	2718	Medical Assistance in Dying	
Kinew	2718	Byram	2729
Paramedic Services		Stone	2730
Cook	2719	Guenter	2730
Kinew	2719	Hiebert	2731
Primary Care Paramedic Program		Provincial Trunk Highway 2	
Cook	2719	Jackson	2731
Kinew	2719	Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices	
MRI Services		King	2732
Bereza	2720	Louise Bridge	
Asagwara	2720	Narth	2732
Need for New School Construction		Provincial Road 275	
Jackson	2721	Wowchuk	2733
Sala	2721	Medical Assistance in Dying	
Access to Affordable Child Care		Perchotte	2734
Byram	2722	Schuler	2734
Cable	2722	Louise Bridge	
Discarded Needles in Public Places		Wharton	2735
Balcaen	2723	Provincial Road 275	
Schmidt	2723	Nesbitt	2735
Mountain View School Board—Flag Ban			
Lamoureux	2724		
Schmidt	2724		

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Debate on Second Readings

Bill 37—The Budget Implementation and Tax
Statutes Amendment Act, 2024

Piwniuk	2737
Nesbitt	2743
Bereza	2744
Byram	2749

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