



Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, March 27, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs Fourth Report

MLA Shannon Corbett (Chairperson): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Your Standing—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispensed.

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

Meetings

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

- *November 20, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. (3rd Session – 43rd Legislature)*
- *March 26, 2026 at 3:30 p.m. (3rd Session – 43rd Legislature)*

Matters under Consideration

- *The hiring process for the Ethics Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator*

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the November 20, 2025 meeting:

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

Your Committee elected MLA LOISELLE as the Chairperson.

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

Committee Membership for the March 26, 2026 meeting:

- *Mr. BLASHKO*
- *MLA CORBETT*
- *Mr. JOHNSON*
- *Mr. KING*
- *Hon. Min. SCHMIDT*
- *Hon. Mr. WIEBE*

Your Committee elected MLA CORBETT as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Mr. BLASHKO as the Vice-Chairperson.

Motions

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

- THAT a sub-committee of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs be struck to manage the process of hiring the Ethics Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator, under the terms and conditions as follows:

(a) the sub-committee consist of four Government Members and two Official Opposition Members;

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

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

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

Your Committee agreed to the following motions at the March 26, 2026 meeting:

- THAT the report and recommendations of the Sub-Committee be received.
- THAT the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs recommends to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba that Sherri Walsh be appointed as the Ethics Commissioner.
- THAT the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs recommends to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba that Sherri Walsh be appointed as the Information and Privacy Adjudicator for a term of five years from date of commencement.

REPORT FROM THE SUB-COMMITTEE

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

Meetings

Your Sub-Committee met on the following occasions:

- December 19, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
- March 3, 2026 at 3:30 p.m.
- March 23, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

The December 19, 2025 meeting was held in camera in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

The March 3, 2026 meeting was held in camera in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.

The March 23, 2026 meeting was held in camera in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- The hiring process for the Ethics Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator

Sub-Committee Membership

Sub-Committee Membership for the December 19, 2025 meeting:

- Mr. BLASHKO
- MLA CORBETT
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- Hon. Min. SCHMIDT
- Mrs. STONE
- Hon. Mr. WIEBE

Your Sub-Committee elected Mr. BLASHKO as the Chairperson.

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

Substitutions received prior to Committee proceedings:

- Mrs. HIEBERT for Mr. GOERTZEN

Sub-Committee Membership for the March 3, 2026 meeting:

- Mr. BLASHKO (Chairperson)
- MLA CORBETT (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- Hon. Min. SCHMIDT
- Mrs. STONE
- Hon. Mr. WIEBE

Substitutions received prior to Committee proceedings:

- Mrs. HIEBERT for Mr. GOERTZEN

Sub-Committee Membership for the March 23, 2026 meeting:

- Mr. BLASHKO (Chairperson)
- MLA CORBETT (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mrs. HIEBERT
- Hon. Min. SCHMIDT
- Mrs. STONE
- Hon. Mr. WIEBE

Staff present for all Sub-Committee meetings

- Deanna Wilson, Executive Director, Legislative Assembly Administration Branch
- Katerina Tefft, Clerk Assistant/Clerk of Committees (except March 23, 2026)
- Melanie Ching, Clerk Assistant/Clerk of Committees (March 23, 2026)

Officials Speaking on Record at the December 19, 2025 meeting

- Jeffrey Schnoor, Ethics Commissioner, Information and Privacy Adjudicator, and Lobbyist Registrar

Agreements by the Sub-Committee

Your Sub-Committee reached the following agreements during the meeting on December 19, 2025:

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

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**Terms of Reference for Hiring of Independent Officers of the Assembly****December 19, 2025****Purpose:**

On November 20, 2025, the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs passed a motion to strike a Sub-Committee to manage the process of hiring the Ethics Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator. The Sub-Committee, consisting of four Government Members and two Official Opposition Members,

has the authority to call its own meetings, the ability to meet in camera, and be able to undertake duties it deems necessary in order to fulfil its responsibilities in the hiring process. The Sub-Committee must report back to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs with a recommendation that has been agreed to by all Members.

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

Roles and Responsibilities:

1. The Sub-Committee assigns the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services to deal with all the logistics and paperwork involved with the hiring process for the Ethics Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator.
2. The Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services will:
 - (a) devise a hiring process which includes an advertising plan, a paper screening process, an interview process and a selection process;
 - (b) draft an advertisement, paper screening criteria and selection criteria;
 - (c) print the advertisement as set out in the advertising plan;
 - (d) conduct the paper screening of applications received;
 - (e) report to the Sub-Committee all qualified candidates for review and selection to interview;
 - (f) conduct interviews on candidates selected by the Sub-Committee;
 - (g) report to the Sub-Committee, the interview rating results on the candidates selected by the Sub-Committee; and
 - (h) conduct reference checks on candidate(s) and report to the Sub-Committee any issues or concerns identified.
3. The Sub-Committee Members will individually have the ability to view the list of qualified candidates along with their background paperwork confidentially at the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services Office prior to the Sub-Committee's review.

4. *The Sub-Committee will review the list of qualified candidates and select which applicant(s) will be interviewed by the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services.*
5. *Each Member of the Sub-Committee shall be entitled to observe the interviews while having participation in the scoring process.*
6. *The Sub-Committee will review the interview rating results and, pending successful reference checks, determine the candidate to be recommended for the position of Ethics Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator.*
7. *The Sub-Committee must provide a report to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs that includes a recommendation for the Ethics Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator.*

Your Sub-Committee reached the following agreements during the meeting on March 3, 2026:

- *To interview three candidates selected for review by Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services.*
- *To adopt the interview questions prepared by Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services as amended.*

Your Sub-Committee reached the following agreements during the meeting on March 23, 2026:

- *Pending successful reference checks, the Sub-Committee agreed to recommend to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs that Sherri Walsh be appointed as the Ethics Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator.*
- *In the event that the chosen candidate declines the offer or the reference checks are unsuccessful, the Sub-Committee agreed to meet again to discuss further options.*

Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services Activities:

As agreed to by the Sub-Committee on December 19, 2025, Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services was tasked with all the logistics and paperwork involved with the hiring process of the Ethics Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator.

On March 3, 2026, Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services reported to the Sub-Committee a list of one qualified candidate and six candidates who met the selection criteria to a certain degree for review and selection to be interviewed.

On March 16, 2026, Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services was notified that one of the candidates who met the selection criteria to a certain degree and was selected by the Sub-Committee for interview had withdrawn from the competition.

On March 18, 2026, Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services was notified that one of the candidates who met the selection criteria to a certain degree and was selected by the Sub-Committee for interview had withdrawn from the competition.

The Sub-Committee considered applications for the position of Ethics Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator as follows:

- *60 applications were received for the position.*
- *One individual was interviewed for the position on March 20, 2026.*

On March 23, 2026, Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services reported to the Sub-Committee the interview rating results of the candidate interviewed.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: The motion is accordingly passed.

No further committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Wab Kinew (Minister responsible for Indigenous Reconciliation): In congruence with section 5(2) of The Path to Reconciliation Act, I'd like to present the '24-25 Path to Reconciliation Act Annual Progress Report to the House.

The Speaker: Further tabling of reports?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I'm pleased to table the 2025 Health Status of Manitobans Report, prepared by Manitoba's Chief Provincial Public Health Officer in accordance with the requirements of section 16 of The Public Health Act.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Indigenous Languages Day

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): *Anishinewin spoken. Translation unavailable.*

Anishinewin text:

Waaciye Giigido-inini.

Mawach Nimoonendan Noongom, jii ganawendamuk Ke Danishinew Kiizhwewinan.

Giispin weda Oonjiiyek Winipek, Miina waste zhagaygun, Asini-wiipiwan Ziibing, Oondenaang, KaMikooMikwa, Kakina Anishinewak Ketabushtoomin Kikiizwewonan.

Ekwa Ooskatizuk ta moonyawak Giispin Abustoowach Anishinabe Ookiizhwewinan Anishinewin, Dakota, Oomuskiigoo, Buskoonuksiiwak, Inuitak, dene-slew-the-nay.

Ga kanoont yook Anishinew gi-giizwewin.

Miigwech.

English translation text:

Hello, Honourable Speaker.

I am filled with joy again today that we continue to look after our Indigenous languages.

If we come from places like Winnipeg, Lake Minnewasta, the Assiniboine River, Odanah Colony, Manitoba or Canada, to name but a few, we are people who use Indigenous languages.

And so it is that our youth will be healthy if they continue to speak the languages of the Anishinaabemowin, Anishinew, Dakota, Cree, Métis, Inuit and Dene peoples.

Let's speak Indigenous languages to one another!

Thank you.

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Today I recognize Indigenous Languages Day, observed on March the 31st. It's a day to celebrate, protect and promote the Indigenous languages that are foundational to Manitoba's history and identity.

Language is more than a means of communication. It is the thread that connects generations, carrying with it stories, culture, traditions and knowledge. Through language, communities pass on values, build understanding and strengthen identity.

We must also acknowledge a difficult truth. In Canada's history, there were deliberate and systemic efforts to suppress and erase Indigenous languages.

These actions caused lasting harm to individuals, families and communities—

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

An Honourable Member: Leave.

The Speaker: Is there leave for the honourable member to finish his statement?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Private Members' Resolution No. 5

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, I have spoken with many families across Manitoba and in my riding of Fort Whyte since this budget was tabled by this NDP government. The response from my constituents: they need two things. They need help right now and they—as they struggle through this affordability crisis, and they need hope for the future.

Help and hope is what Manitobans are asking for; two things that are in short supply in this NDP budget.

Instead of help, this government is offering Manitoba savings of 2 cents on a litre of milk. Instead of help, this government is offering 1 and a half cents of savings on a litre of gas.

And, to add insult to injury, this government now will give you 7 cents off a can of pop—unless you buy it at a gas station, local grocery store or restaurant. Then, there are zero savings for you.

The NDP is offering you pennies, not help.

My constituents know this Premier is adept at making speeches, stunts and smiling for the camera. But when it comes to delivering on his promises, he is falling short.

The Premier's work this week was less than stellar. His budget provided no help for struggling families. And then the Premier made it clear there'd be no help for small businesses or local grocers.

No help and no hope.

This budget was supposed to bring hope for economic growth to the small businesses and families throughout Manitoba. But it has brought uncertainty and insecurity, Honourable Speaker.

On this side of the House, the PCs' proposal would increase the basic personal tax exemption up to \$30,000, allowing up to each family to save \$3,000 in your pocket, Honourable Speaker. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: That is help. That is hope. That's what Manitobans need. That's what this budget fails to deliver.

And that's what we, on this side of the House, will deliver for Manitobans. The PCs are committed to providing an actual plan that will provide you help and hope.

World Autism Awareness Day

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): As someone assessed for my own neurodivergence about a year ago, I take great meaning in rising today to recognize World Autism Awareness Day on April 2.

Autism is not one single experience, nor does it present identically in each person who lives with it. It shapes how folks communicate, how they connect with others and how they see the world, presenting different strengths, perspectives and ways of thinking that enrich our communities.

* (10:10)

Though, our current world also creates different challenges for those living with autism, challenges that include stigma, misunderstanding and discrimination.

Across the globe, April 2 is an opportunity for folks of all abilities to make special effort to truly see the autistic experience and to think critically about how our communities can be made better for those who live in it.

Autism cannot be defined by limitations, but by the livelihood those living with autism bring to our community. That livelihood manifests itself in how deeply they feel, how observant they are, and how much they can teach us.

Far too often, people with autism feel the burden to mask their gifts that make them who they are, out of fear of being found out and treated differently. Not only can constant masking lead to burnout and depression in people with autism, masking deprives the wider community of what they have to offer at their full capacity.

That's why, to mark this year's world autism day, I challenge all Manitobans to think critically about

what they can do to become a safer person for those living with autism, a safer person who creates an implicit environment where they can reach their full potential as their truest self.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Whoop & Hollar Folk Festival

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): I am pleased today to highlight the Whoop & Hollar Folk Festival. This festival is a 100 per cent volunteer-driven, grassroots, non-profit organization, founded in 2015 by Linda and Mitchell Omichinski and Josh Wright, who are here with us today.

Each sun-summer, the Whoop & Hollar festival takes place on an acreage with gardens, nature trails, tent camping and intimate sites for performances and workshops. The festival supports and promotes local music and arts in Portage la Prairie, while bringing in touring performing artists from Manitoba and across Canada, like Valdy, Indian City and Sweet Alibi, just to name a few.

Music, arts, nature and community are the pillars of the organization, exemplified through the work of the summer festival and the year-round events like in the winter concert series and the popular open mic and jam sessions.

Now in its 12th year, the festival was the recipient of the Outstanding Commitment to Community award from the Portage Chamber of Commerce in 2025 and the Marketing Excellence award from the Central Manitoba Tourism association in 2019. It was also one of two finalists for Event of the Year at the Manitoba and Winnipeg provincial Tourism Awards in 2023.

Whoop & Hollar's goal is to remain inclusive and accessible for folks of all walks of life, connecting local residents and visiting tourists with affordable and free programming.

Local volunteers, sponsors and strong community partnerships with groups like Visions of Independence—this is just truly a wonderful festival and I'd like all members to join me in honouring Linda and Mitchell Omichinski and Josh Wright, who are here in the gallery with us.

Well done, Whoop & Hollar festival.

Les Rendez-Vous de la Francophonie

French spoken

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): L'Honorable Président, chaque année en mars, Saint-Boniface et les communautés de tout le Manitoba s'animent à l'occasion des Rendez-vous de la Francophonie, une célébration qui met en valeur la richesse de la langue française et des cultures qui façonnent notre province.

Au Manitoba, cette importante initiative nationale est coordonnée par la Société de la francophonie manitobaine, dont le leadership contribue à donner vie à ces célébrations dans toutes nos communautés.

Les festivités de cette année ont officiellement débuté le 4 mars 2026 avec un lancement au Musée canadien des droits de la personne. Organisé en partenariat avec le musée, ce rassemblement a réuni des leaders communautaires et des partenaires pour marquer le coup d'envoi provincial d'un mois entier d'activités.

À Winnipeg, la participation s'est manifestée aux quatre coins de la ville. Au Centre culturel franco-manitobain, les familles se sont rassemblées pour des concerts et des spectacles qui ont réuni des personnes de toutes les générations. Dans nos écoles locales, les élèves ont pris part à des activités en français, découvrant de nouveaux artistes et de nouvelles histoires et une fierté plus profonde d'être qui ils sont.

Et dans les lieux communautaires de toute la ville, les Manitobains se sont réunis pour des projections de films, des ateliers culturels et des discussions qui ont renforcé les liens au sein de la communauté francophone et bien au-delà.

En tant que député de Saint-Boniface, je constate chaque jour la fierté, la créativité et la résilience qui 'caractérisent' nos communautés francophones. Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie nous rappellent que notre langue continue de façonner qui nous sommes aujourd'hui et où nous allons. C'est une célébration qui nous rassemble.

Je tiens à remercier la Société de la francophonie manitobaine, ainsi que les nombreux partenaires, bénévoles, artistes et membres de la communauté qui rendent ces célébrations possibles. Grâce à vous, la francophonie manitobaine continue de rayonner partout dans notre belle province.

Merci.

Translation

Honourable Speaker, each March, St. Boniface and communities across Manitoba come alive with Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie, a celebration that highlights the richness of the French language and the cultures that shape our province. In Manitoba, this important national initiative is co-ordinated by the Société de la francophonie manitobaine, whose leadership helps bring these celebrations to life across our communities.

This year's festivities officially began on March 4, 2026, with a launch at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Organized in partnership with the museum, this gathering brought together community leaders and partners to mark the provincial kickoff for a full month of activity.

In Winnipeg, there was an engagement from every corner of the city. At the Centre culturel franco-manitobain, families gathered for concerts and performances that brought people together across generations. At local schools, students took part in French-language activities, discovering new artists, stories and a deeper pride in who they are. And at community venues across the city, Manitobans came together for film screenings, cultural workshops, and conversations that strengthened connections within and beyond the Francophone community.

As the MLA for St. Boniface, I see every day the pride, creativity and resilience that define our Francophone community. Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie reminds us that our language continues to shape who we are today and where we are going. It's a celebration that brings us together.

I want to thank the Société de la francophonie manitobaine, along with the many partners, volunteers, artists and community members who make these celebrations possible. Thanks to you, Manitoba's Francophone community continues to shine throughout our province.

Greg Wiens

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I rise today to recognize an extraordinary constituent, Greg Wiens, whose work is quietly transforming lives around the world.

Greg's journey began through his calling as a Mennonite pastor, rooted in service and a deep commitment to helping others. That calling has taken him far beyond our borders, into rural villages, refugee camps and communities where something as

simple as a pair of glasses can mean the difference between dependence and opportunity.

Today, 2 and a half billion people worldwide lack access to basic prescription glasses. In parts of northern Ghana, there is fewer than one optometrist for every 100,000 people. Without clear vision, adults struggle to work and children struggle to learn, trapping families in a cycle of poverty.

Through his work with Global Vision 2020, Greg is helping change that. Using an innovative system, local entrepreneurs can test vision and dispense custom prescription glasses in minutes at a cost of less than \$7 per pair. This model has already delivered over one million pairs of glasses worldwide.

Most recently, Greg and his partners secured funding to train 25 nurses in Ghana, equipping them with the skills and tools they will keep, ensuring ongoing access to care and putting sustainability into action. As Greg has said, this work is about moving from charity to sustainability.

That shift has been made possible through partnership with iDE Canada, an award-winning, Winnipeg-based leader in international development. By empowering local entrepreneurs and building community-led systems, iDE has been a catalyst in transforming this work into a scalable, market-based solution.

On behalf of this House, I invite all members to join me in recognizing Greg Wiens from Global Vision 2020, and Stu Taylor of iDE Canada, who join us in the gallery today, for their dedication, leadership and the lasting difference they are making in the lives of so many.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to moving on, I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the loge to my right, where we have with us today Jim Dinn, member of the Newfoundland House of Assembly for St. John's Centre and leader of the Newfoundland NDP.

We welcome you here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Cost of Living for Manitobans Budget 2026—Affordability

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): According to the Canada food price report, the average Manitoba family spends about \$300 a week on groceries, almost all of which is on

essential foods such as meats, proteins, fruits and vegetables, dairy, eggs and bread. The basics, the food that we already are PST-exempt from paying.

That means that almost all of your groceries are already exempt from PST. So what really has the Premier done with his PST exemption on groceries? Virtually nothing. A weekly grocery shop of \$300 per week will generate about \$30 of goods that have the PST applied to it. Let me spell that out for the Premier: That's about a savings of \$2 a week.

* (10:20)

How can the Premier look the good people of Manitoba in the eye and tell them that he's actually making life more affordable by saving them \$2 a week?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Honourable Speaker, Manitobans have been talking to us about the cost of living, and in Budget 2026 we're delivering. We're taking all the tax off of all food and drinks from the grocery store. When we came into office we took all the tax off of gasoline in Manitoba. We saved you \$350 million in the process.

What do they do on the other side? They can't keep up with us on tax cuts. They can't keep up with us on balancing the books. In fact, I'll table the latest review from Morningstar DBRS rating agency which says, Manitoba's '26-27 budget balance within reach.

We're balancing the books. We're fixing health care. We're saving you money. No wonder they pick on minority communities. It's the only thing they got left on the PC side.

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

Mr. Khan: Manitobans know that about 90 per cent of their groceries are already PST-exempt, but Manitoba families are struggling with the cost of affordability. Costs are up on 100 per cent of grocery items.

Manitoba families need help now, not only with pop and pretzels, but with healthy foods like meats and vegetables. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: They need a plan to help with 100 per cent of the groceries they buy, not 10 per cent of the snacks and junk food.

Why the Manitoba Premier is so out of touch with Manitoba families shocks everyone, Honourable

Speaker. You, me and the rest of this House and all Manitobans know the cost of living is a real crisis right now.

The Premier seems to be happy with announcing a \$2 of savings a week for Manitobans.

How is the Premier so arrogant that he can look at Manitobans that are struggling to—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —pay their bills and say that he's going to make your life easier by saving you pennies when, on this side of the House, we want to save you hundreds and thousands of dollars?

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Kinew: Honourable Speaker, you know what there is in Budget 2026? There's a plan to take 100 per cent of the tax off of 100 per cent of the food and drinks at the grocery store. When you want to eat healthy at the grocery store, but you're in a rush, you're a busy parent; you've got to get the food on the table after school before you take the kids to hockey practice or piano. What do you do? You run into Co-op or Safeway or Sobeys; you grab a rotisserie chicken; you grab the Greek salad; you go grab a case of drinks—make it the sugar-free drinks. That's good news in Budget 2026: none of that has tax on it anymore if—and only if—the PCs bow down and let us pass our budget by June.

So what are they going to do? Are they going stand up and argue about how great our plan is or are they going to get out of the way to save you money?

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

Basic Personal Tax Rate—Exemption Increase Request for Government to Support Resolution

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier's smiling arrogance isn't making life more affordable for Manitobans; it's actually making it harder, Honourable Speaker.

The Premier stands up and says \$2 of savings is going to make your life better. Over 90 per cent of items in the grocery store are already PST-exempt. The Premier is taking the PST off of chips, pop, saving you pennies, Honourable Speaker. We, on this side of the House, presented a plan that would save Manitobans thousands of dollars a year, and this Premier is voting against it. We want to put more money back in your pocket. This Premier wants to save you pennies.

But the Premier can correct his track record today. He can stand up and support our PC resolution that will provide Manitoba families with up to \$3,000 back in their bank accounts instead of sprinkling pennies across Manitobans.

Will he do the right thing today and support our resolution to make life more affordable for Manitobans?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): We know that the cost of living is a big priority for you, and that's why we're taking all the tax off of all groceries at the grocery store. That's why we cut the tax on gasoline. That's why we froze electricity rates. That's why we froze the price of milk in Manitoba. This is real relief that you can believe in.

Nobody believes the PCs because, you know what? They were in government for two terms. What did they do on the price of milk? They signed off at the Cabinet table on raising it. What did they do on gasoline prices? Absolutely nothing. What did they do to help you at the grocery store? Absolutely nothing.

Instead, they chose to campaign on attacking LGBT folks and Indigenous women. Obviously, they got shown the door for that embarrassing 'conduct,' and now that they're in opposition, now all of a sudden: Believe us. Now, all of a sudden: We got a plan to help you with the cost of living. No one believes you.

Let's keep working together, Manitoba. We're making life better.

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

Mr. Khan: It's not just about saving Manitobans money; it's also about what happens with those savings. Our proposal on this side of the House is designed to improve Manitoba's economy, which under this NDP government is dead last in the country yet again, because we know that when—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —Manitobans have extra cash in their pockets, they'll spend more money in Manitoba. Those restaurants that the Premier is unwilling to help out, those small businesses, those local grocery stores that the Premier has left out intentionally out of this PST exemption are suffering, Honourable Speaker. Small businesses, medium-sized businesses, even larges, would thrive under our plan because we know when Manitobans have more money in their pockets, they will reinvest in their economy.

Does the Premier understand that allowing Manitobans to keep more of their own money will grow the economy or is he just being arrogant and refusing to do the math?

Mr. Kinew: Honourable Speaker, we're the party of small business because we got the small businesses on this side of the House that actually went out and earned it. On that side of the House, they're the silver spoon party—was handed to each and every one of them.

So what are we doing to help small business? Security rebate programs to protect your hard-earned investments. We've taken thousands of businesses off of the payroll tax in Manitoba, and we were also the party that brought in the corporate income tax exemption for small businesses.

What did they do on that side of the House? Well, Heather Stefanson, the worst premier in Manitoba history, gave their now-leader 500 grand.

What did he do with that money? Did he help the restaurants that he's now trying to cry around for? Did he help the small businesses? No, he sat on that money, he frittered it away. He ended up getting sued by fellow PC donors, and now, at the nadir of popularity—go ahead, google that term—they're trying to change their tune.

Too little, too late. We're—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

PST Exemption on Food Products Limitations for Small Businesses

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): That's quite rich and hypocritical coming from the Premier who went to private school, lives on Wellington Crescent and also has a police escort driving him everywhere. He hasn't done his own grocery shopping in years, Honourable Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: When anyone has questions about this Premier, Honourable Speaker, he pretends that this benefit will protect everyone. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: That's simply not true. What we have in Winnipeg and Manitoba are called food deserts.

That is a low-income area which is over two kilometres from the nearest big grocery store. Manitobans living in food desert areas are largely represented by these NDP MLAs, which is obvious they don't care about making life more affordable for you. People who live in this area rely on local grocery stores and convenience stores. Yet this Premier has left them off of this PST exemption.

Is the Premier unaware of how people who need a break aren't actually getting it or does he simply not care?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Honourable Speaker, not only did we remove all tax at the grocery store to help people living in poverty, we're also making transit free for all children and youth in Manitoba. That's not only going to help with poverty, not only is that going to help with the cost of living, that helps with the environment too. Plus there's more: 2 and a half million dollars towards adult literacy, a generational investment to help those Manitobans that, for whatever reason, haven't gotten the same chance at success that some more fortunate Manitobans have.

More fortunate Manitobans, like their colleague from Red River North. You'll remember that they recently, within the past couple of weeks, had one of their MLAs leave the party because they refused to take action on the biggest corruption scandal in Manitoba history. Just yesterday, their former premier was asked about the Sio Silica affair, and he said, and I quote: I'll only say our record as a government when I was premier was one of integrity, said Pallister—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

Basic Personal Tax Rate—Exemption Increase Request for Government to Support Resolution

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): It's clear the Premier doesn't want to talk about affordability for Manitobans, but we will. Manitobans are \$200 a month away from losing everything, Honourable Speaker; \$200 for making ends meet.

* (10:30)

The Premier has rejected our PC plan that will allow you to keep up to \$250 more in your bank accounts, up to \$3,000 a year for Manitoba families. Imagine being \$200 away from being broke and someone giving you \$250 a month. That is a big

difference, not pennies, Honourable Speaker. You can choose \$250 under our PC plan a month or pennies under this Premier and his failing NDP government. The Premier has done nothing to make life more affordable, other than sprinkle pennies across this province.

Why is the Premier offering seven cents off a can of pop instead of giving Manitobans up to \$3,000 back?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Well, there you go, it's the nanny-state party of the current PCs of Manitoba getting after you for drinking pop. On this side of the House, yes, you should eat the chicken and you should eat the Greek salad. But we also know that it's your choice. You know why? We believe in freedom on this side of the House.

On that side of the House, they hate freedom. They hate the freedom of a woman who has the right to choose with her own body. They hate the freedom of LGBT people to be who they are. They hate the freedom of Indigenous women to live free of violence in our society.

The only thing we hate on this side of the House: people who fake it at election time like the PCs. Everyone else, come on board. We're saving you money. We're saving the environment. Heck, we might even save our democracy by consigning them to opposition for the rest of time. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Economic Growth for Manitoba Business Support Concerns

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): This NDP budget has gone over like a lead balloon. It was disappointing for families who expected some real relief from the affordability crisis. It was disappointing to the City of Winnipeg that's now left holding the bag on NEWPCC. But it was particularly disappointing for small businesses. Rising input costs, skyrocketing energy bills, workforce challenges, high taxes. Not only did this NDP budget fail to do anything to address these problems, it actually made them worse.

Why are small businesses just an afterthought to this NDP government?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Honourable Speaker, our budget—and I want to thank the Premier and the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) for stewarding the best budget in all of Canada.

Not only does it deliver on some of the best rates—and Morningstar DBS *[phonetic]* is calling it balance within reach, Manitoba's 2026-2027 budget. But it also delivers on real affordability for real Manitobans by taking PST off of all food and drinks in grocery stores. That's real affordability, that's real action from a real government that cares about Manitobans.

On top of that, we're supporting businesses by doubling our export support program and making sure they have the financing program with the new \$50-million loan program, and a new safety program to make sure that we can support businesses when they need it.

That's a government that cares about small businesses, cares about growing our economy and cares about affordability—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: Nothing the minister said there reflected priorities put forward by Manitoba small businesses in advance of this terrible budget. The fact that the NDP completely forgot about small businesses is pretty disappointing. But to add insult to injury, the NDP government purposely excluded small businesses and restaurants from their pitiful, meagre, so-called affordability measure in this budget. They're giving preferential treatment to Loblaws, Walmart and Costco over Manitoba small grocers and restaurants. No tax-free chicken for them.

So my question to this minister is: What has he got against Manitoba small businesses that he is intentionally driving Manitoba consumers to their large national chain competitors?

Mr. Moses: Well, our budget, Honourable Speaker—and I'll remind Manitobans that it focuses on good jobs, better health care and lower costs—is one that delivers on the priorities for all Manitobans, including small businesses. Our track record of taking small businesses, hundreds of small businesses, off of the payroll tax is one that's incredibly strong.

On top of that, we didn't stop there. We're doing more to help small businesses. That includes ensuring that they have the supports to keep their businesses safe, that they can actually help export their industries with a doubling of our Export Support Program and, on top of that, providing them the capital and the investment tools to grow their businesses right here at home.

We'll continue doing that work on behalf of all businesses to make sure we have a strong economy well into the future.

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

Mrs. Cook: This minister is just wrong. The NDP jacked up property taxes for small businesses and cancelled their rebates completely. They provided no payroll tax relief, no incentives to grow. They didn't reverse their damaging changes to apprenticeship ratios. And when it comes to red tape reduction, this NDP government took Manitoba from the best in the country to the worst, in two years.

The result has been six consecutive quarters where business exits have outpaced new business starts in Manitoba. That is a clear sign of declining business confidence.

Why is this NDP government actively driving small businesses out of Manitoba?

Mr. Moses: Well, when it comes to our budget, we look in to the banks. So let's not listen to members opposite who clearly didn't read through the whole thing and know what they're talking about.

Let's listen to BMO who said—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moses: —finally, surplus is calling. That's a budget that delivers on priorities for Manitobans.

On top of that, we delivered on affordability with real relief for individuals who—by taking the PST off groceries, by ensuring we have free transit for youth, by ensuring we have free child care for the folks who need the help the most, by ensuring we have a new increase to our Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit of \$1,700.

And on top of all of that we're helping renters, too, with an increase to the renter's tax credit. That's real relief for Manitobans. We're supporting individuals—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

North End Sewage Treatment Plant Funding Inquiry in Budget 2026

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): We're seeing a trend here. When this government doesn't have the answer, they just simply ignore it.

Yesterday, we repeatedly asked on what page is the budget showcased for the North End treatment

plant? Well, this government didn't give an answer. They said—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Narth: —there was billions of dollars. The minister said there's millions of dollars, but nobody could give a straight answer. Well, the answer is on page 70, and it's simply just stating that the development of a plan will be made.

Honourable Speaker, will this Premier not understand, or, does this Premier not understand the difference between making a plan and funding a plan?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to thank the member opposite for pointing out the great investment we're making in the North End Water Pollution Control Centre in Budget 2026. You know, down the hall last night, they were gathered putting the old seal clappers together for the person who couldn't even talk to the mayor of Winnipeg.

You know where I was? I was having dinner with Scott Gillingham, charting a bright future for this wonderful province. So there's the contrast. Members opposite who can't pick up the phone, who can't send a text, who can't even send a telegram to the City of Winnipeg.

And here's the other thing that we're doing on affordability. By printing it in such large text in our budget, we're making sure that their staffers will have jobs for years to come, too. Keep coming in here and writing questions for the opposition to share the good news about Budget 2026.

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

Mr. Narth: Honourable Speaker, this government doesn't have a plan. What it is, is a sticky note from the government to themselves reminding them to eventually come up with a plan.

And Manitobans are finding it very disrespectful. They find it disrespectful that this Premier has time for a finger-licking, chicken-eating publicity stunt, but he does not have time to showcase the financial plan—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Stop the clock. Order.

The Speaker is standing. We've done pretty good up 'til now. Let's try and keep it that way for the rest of the day.

Mr. Narth: Honourable Speaker, the fact is, this Premier is restricting the development potential of our largest city in the province.

If the funding exists, how much is it, when will it come and where can it be found? Manitobans deserve the answer, not just the mayor of the City of Winnipeg.

* (10:40)

Mr. Kinew: Honourable Speaker, I don't know if we're getting close to lunchtime or what in this Chamber, but I'm all of a sudden thinking about those 11 different herbs and spices. And when you're talking about 11 different herbs and spices, you're talking about more herbs and spices than there are MLAs still sitting with this leader in the Progressive Conservative caucus.

So on that side of the House, not only could they never get along with cities and municipalities, they can't even get along with themselves. The big portrait unveiling yesterday, they couldn't even invite their last premier, Heather Stefanson, to attend. We'll let them go ahead and go into PC family counselling.

On this side of the House, we're one big happy family: you, the neighbours, your government, working together to fix health care, to make life more affordable, to make a better tomorrow.

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

Mr. Narth: Once again, theatrics and jokes from this Premier, and no clear plan. The disrespect to Manitobans is thick.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. Stop the clock.

The government bench needs to come to order.

Mr. Narth: Honourable Speaker, the disrespect is thick from this Premier and this government. All Manitobans deserve to know what the plan is, not just a backroom conversation between a mayor and a premier. All Manitobans deserve to know the direction of this province.

Honourable Speaker, why is this government risking economic growth and affordability by failing to provide a clear and credible funding plan for the North End treatment plant?

Mr. Kinew: Honourable Speaker, we're funding the North End Water Pollution Control Centre. It's a project they could never get done during their time in

government. We've had money for the North End plant every single year, in every single budget.

But they really need to get outside of the Perimeter. They suffer from a severe case of perimeteritis, because we're also funding water and waste water in the RSR region, in the Pembina Valley region and in the Westman.

Yesterday, they were telling us again how much great news there is for Brandon in Budget 2026, but then their leader brought in the amendment to the budget motion. And I looked through clause (a), clause (b), clause (c), all the way to clause (r). That's right, he couldn't get to clause (z), for the record. Not a single mention of Brandon.

How dare they leave out Manitoba's second largest city, these Perimeter-hugging PC hypocrites.

Manitoba Hydro Outage Protocols Power Restoration Timelines—Small Communities

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, Manitobans are being told that Manitoba Hydro does not dispatch crews overnight for outages affecting fewer than 500 customers.

Can the minister confirm whether this is an official policy and explain how the government can justify delaying restoration for smaller and rural communities, particularly in extreme weather?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Honourable Speaker, our track record on Hydro is pretty clear: that we want to continue to build up our generation capacity so that we can work and power projects and communities right across our province, but also deliver affordability for Manitobans. That's our plan. We've been really clear about that, unlike the record of members opposite.

When they were in power, what did they—we see? We saw backroom deals, rates being jacked up in the dark of night in—at the Cabinet table and not a single kilowatt of energy, of new power was generated under their time in office. That is a terrible record they should be shameful of.

And so for us, we want to deliver on real affordability for energy for all Manitobans to help grow a prosperous economy.

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

Mr. King: Well, there you have it, Honourable Speaker, the minister not dealing with the issue at hand that I had in my constituency just a week ago.

Honourable Speaker, even smaller outages can put lives and livelihoods at risk, impacting seniors, relying—those relying on medical devices and farm operations that depend on power for livestock, ventilation and water systems.

What risk assessment has been conducted to ensure that limiting overnight response does not endanger Manitobans or their animals or emergency response?

Mr. Moses: I appreciate the question from member opposite. We'll certainly look into the particular issues the member is raising and be able to deliver on them on a really solid way.

But I think the main focus here is, how do we ensure we have clean, affordable energy for all Manitobans that they can count on and is reliable? Our plan is to make sure we work with Indigenous communities to deliver on 600 megawatts of new wind generation power. That's going to power our economy well into the future. And while we do that, we deliver on affordability for Manitobans, including our hydro-rate freeze, which allowed Manitobans to have frozen rates for an entire year. That is delivering on affordability, reliability, and on energy generation, a plan that we're happy to live on that is a completely foreign concept to—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Lengthy Manitoba Hydro Outages Potential Loss of Cellular Phone Service

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, the minister needs to concentrate on delivering that service to rural Manitoba—an overnight outage that often exceeds the backup power capacity of cell towers—if it exists at all. The loss of cellular service can cut off access to 911 and emergency communication. This has the very real potential to cause a tragedy.

Why is this minister putting the lives of Manitobans at risk?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Honourable Speaker, we're going to make sure we have the safety of Manitobans as our top priority, as we do across all

files. And we work hard with Manitoba Hydro to ensure that they have—deliver on reliable energy to every corner of the province and we'll continue to do that good work.

But let me be clear about their record with Manitoba Hydro, where they, in the dark of night, at the Cabinet table, jacked up the rates for Manitobans. That's their record. All while delivering zero—let's repeat that again—zero new energy. Not a single kilowatt of new energy was generated under their former failed government.

So we will continue to work to deliver affordability, reliability and new energy generation for Manitobans for this generation and the generation to come.

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Support for RAAM Services Request to Increase Funding

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): People in the audience here today and people watching deserve real answers, not joking and laughing like the Premier (Mr. Kinew) is doing. This budget allocates \$5.6 million for drug consumption, yet only \$1.5 million for the Anne Oake Recovery Centre. It also includes nothing—not a thing—for a new RAAM clinic. It is clear that this government is more comfortable trapping vulnerable people in addiction than it is in providing options for treatment and recovery.

Why is this NDP government doing nothing for funding treatment?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): What I would say to that member is, when they were in government, they did nothing to help and support people who were struggling with mental health and addictions. What they did is, they sold off Manitoba housing, they put people in tents, they left seniors who were outside in—outside this building asking, begging that government to help them with their housing at Lions Place.

Did they listen to them? No. They have a government who is listening, who is supporting. We're taking a four-pillared approach, which is harm reduction, getting people to the supports and services they need on to a path of recovery. We are working on enforcement along with our Justice Minister to get the drugs off the street. We are working with our—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Funding Increase Request for Anne Oake Centre

MLA Bereza: The team at the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre does amazing work and the results speak for themselves. The Anne Oake model is designed to give women the best chance for success, unlike the drug consumption sites that this government is wanting—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Bereza: —a model that other jurisdictions are getting away from as quickly as possible.

Why does this NDP government insist on picking a failed model for funding instead of expanding on proven success recovery stories?

Ms. Smith: I want to lift up Bruce Oake for all of the incredible work that they are doing. And again, we are taking a pillar—a balanced approach and we are funding them and we are funding Anne Oake as well, so I'm looking forward to the opening of that centre.

Again, we are educating, we are, you know, funding nutrition program to ensure kids are in school and we—we're working with parents as well. We are also working with RAAM clinic—first open Indigenous RAAM clinic ever—who are leading people to recovery.

* (10:50)

We've expanded capacity to digital RAAM so people can get supports and services right across our great province, something the previous government never did. We will take no lessons—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

MLA Bereza: Maybe the government missed this earlier on, but this budget is allocating \$5.6 million for consumption—drug consumption sites—yet only a million and a half for Anne Oake. RAAM clinics aren't included in this budget despite their proven success.

In two and a half years, this NDP government has failed to expand services and open a single clinic. They cut the ribbon on investments made by our government, but have shown no initiative of their own.

Treatment works. The recovery model works. So why is this minister insisting on doubling down on a failed model her Premier (Mr. Kinew) is back-peddalling—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Ms. Smith: So let me educate the member on investments that we're making. We've increased adult primary treatment in Winnipeg, St. Norbert, Brandon, Ste. Rose, Thompson, The Pas. We've increased youth addiction services right across our great province. We've increased Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine right across the province. We've increased rapid addictions, again, digitally, so anywhere in Manitoba people can get access to those services.

Under the PCs, opioid addictions, overdoses, increased in 2019. Honourable Speaker, 143 deaths went all the way up in 2023 to 794 deaths. That was under their record.

We'll take no lessons from members opposite. We'll continue to support, meet people—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Personal-Care Homes Improved Food Service

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): Honourable Speaker, after years of neglect under the previous government, seniors were left with decaying personal-care homes, declining quality of life. But seniors built this province and they deserve to live with dignity and respect.

Just yesterday our government had important news for seniors across this province. Can the Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care please tell Manitobans a bit more about yesterday's finger-licking good announcements?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, as the Premier has said, food is medicine, and we were so excited to stand with seniors to announce that we're investing \$5 million for better food at personal-care homes right across Manitoba. That means fresher meals, better nutrition and more choices for seniors.

But this is about more than just food; this is about dignity, comfort and quality of life. The PCs closed personal-care homes and they cut funding, but our government is building four of them and we're making sure that seniors, no matter where you live in this

province, can age with dignity, care and respect. More done, much to do.

Emergency Expenditures Budget Funding Inquiry

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Speaker, as they say, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. That's exactly what this Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) seems to be setting up for. After blaming part of his massive deficit on the 2025 wildfire season, Budget 2026 has no additional contingency for a possible extreme wildfire season.

Why has this NDP government not reversed their dangerous cut in the Natural Resources emergency expenditures budget?

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures): I thank the member for that question. Unfortunately, he's the minister that actually cut all that funding. So as the former failed Natural Resources minister, he cut that funding.

And let's be clear, Honourable Speaker: We sat here on the cusp of the worst wildfire season in history and they sat here and rang the bells. While we were in a state of emergency last spring, what did they do? They called that the best days of their lives. Shameful on them.

We're investing; we're digging out of that hole. We're continuing to invest across the wildfire season in anticipation of what we look like and what it's going to be coming forward. And we're increasing the dollars to that, something members opposite never, ever did.

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

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, thousands of Manitobans were displaced by wildfires in 2025. Many lost their homes, and their lives have changed.

Weather data from Environment and Climate Change shows precipitation is 40 to 60 per cent of normal in the northern fire area. Verbal reports from northern residents indicate that nearly 20 fires are burning beneath the snowpack.

Given these reports, why is this NDP government sacrificing emergency preparedness to try and fake a lower budget deficit?

Mr. Bushie: Honourable Speaker, \$1.2 million to add 19 new wildfire firefighters to the season, \$1.2 million to upgrade the weather information and fire mapping

systems, \$1.1 million for aerial firefighting services, Thompson firefighting base.

Honourable Speaker, we're investing strategically across the entirety of the province in anticipation of what the fire season may look like. I know members opposite wanted to be able to hope it rained, hope it didn't—the fires didn't start. That's not hope for—at all.

For us, we want to be able to invest in strategic ways across the entirety of province, and we're doing that in real time. So as we go on, we continue the conversations, learning from last year. I know members opposite do not want to learn from their mistakes. They want to just continue on and make mistake after mistake after mistake. We're going to learn, we're going to adapt—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bushie: —we're going to effect—and we're going to invest.

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

Mr. Nesbitt: I table the department's weather report for this minister. Fire crews from Manitoba, other provinces and around the world moved heaven and earth to save lives and property. It's incredibly insulting to firefighters and all Manitobans that this government has reflected on these heroic efforts but learned no lessons. The wildfire suppression budget line hasn't changed.

Considering inflation, why has this minister cut wildfire suppression spending?

Mr. Bushie: I'll say it again: \$1.2 million to add 19 firefighters to the system, \$1.2 million to upgrade the fire mapping system, \$1.1 million for aerial firefighting services. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bushie: That member opposite did nothing but cut, cut, cut and hope and pray that it didn't—the fires didn't start, that it rained and rained. I know he's trying to table weather reports, but the fact of the matter is, Honourable Speaker, we lived this in real time.

And I do want to uplift everybody who stepped up in the fire season last year because we truly were one Manitoba, with the exception of members opposite.

Emergency Expenditures Budget Funding Inquiry

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): After the devastating wildfires that tore through Manitoba in 2025, families and entire communities expect this government to be better prepared. The NDP cut the emergency management budget knowing that risks of wildfires after years of dry weather are growing in Manitoba. In fact, they budgeted only \$50 million for emergency preparedness, and yet fighting last year's wildfires cost \$350 million.

Why has this government failed to ensure that this year's budget reflects the growing risk of wildfires rather than reacting after communities are already in crisis?

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures): Honourable Speaker, \$75 million for the attack base in Thompson: that's an investment that's real time that people could count on in northern Manitoba.

I know the member opposite in his seat here sitting in the Chamber today, this is the furthest north he's ever been in the province of Manitoba. And that's shameful. So he gets up here and pretends to speak and represent the entirety of the province when he has no idea what he's talking about. We talk about perimeteritis; that member is just—chamberitis, and he doesn't go anywhere else besides outside of this Chamber.

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

Mr. Guenter: You know, that's—that is not a serious minister. We saw it right there.

And I'm wondering why the minister responsible for emergency preparedness isn't allowed to get up and answer these questions. So this one's for her.

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) said in a CBC article that emergency funding is merely a, quote, placeholder. Yet the 2025 wildfires underlined the need for preparedness to save lives and homes.

This NDP government's most recent budget has failed to restore the funding that they cut. And yet last year's wildfires cost seven times more to fight than they budgeted. Not only is this fiscally irresponsible and imprudent, but it undermines proper emergency planning and preparedness.

Why has this minister failed to do her job?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I know this is unfamiliar to members opposite, but on this side of the House, we're a team. We work together across departments. We work across departments to support Manitobans.

* (11:00)

EMO did an incredible job of supporting Manitobans this past summer, and we've added 15 new full-time positions to EMO in advance of hazard season in the year ahead, which we all hope to have a better year, but we will continue to work together as a government to support Manitobans.

We will always be there in an emergency for all Manitobans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: And there's some more guests in the gallery I'd like to introduce at this time.

Draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Tina Zink-Brawn, Nana Sakamoto, Amanda Will, who are guests of the honourable member for Lagimodière (Mr. Blashko).

We welcome you here today.

* * *

The Speaker: As I said, the time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION

The Speaker: Order, please.

As previously agreed, we will now consider a government resolution regarding the appointment of the Ethics Commissioner. Once that is concluded, we will resume debate on the budget motion.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe),

WHEREAS a subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs was struck to manage the hiring

process for the Ethics Commissioner and the Information and Privacy Adjudicator; and

WHEREAS the subcommittee, following an open competition and consideration of applicants, recommended to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs that Sherri Walsh be appointed Ethics Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator; and

WHEREAS the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba; and

WHEREAS pursuant to subsection 11(1) of The Lobbyists Registration Act, a person shall be appointed by—the registrar by resolution of the Assembly.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to subsection 33(1) of The Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act, Sherri Walsh be appointed as Ethics Commissioner, effective May 1, 2026; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, pursuant to subsection 58.1(1) of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Sherri Walsh be appointed as the Information and Privacy Adjudicator effective May 1, 2026, for a term of five years from the date of commencement; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, pursuant to subsection 11(1) of The Lobbyist Registration Act, Sherri Walsh be appointed as Lobbyist Registrar effective May 1, 2026, for a term of five years from the date of commencement.

The Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Families, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), that—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

So now the floor is open for debate.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): On behalf of our NDP caucus, we want to wish Sherri Walsh an excellent five years in her new role, and each and every one of us look forward to working with her as she helps us fill out the many, many different forms that we have to fill out as members of this Legislative Assembly.

Congratulations.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Yes, as elected officials, we rely on this position being filled here today by Sherri. So, so often, there's questions

that we reach out and there's always going to be answers there. So it's comforting to know that Sherri will fill this role and I just want to say welcome from the PC caucus.

The Speaker: No further members wishing to debate?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question is: Shall the resolution pass?

Resolution agreed to.

BUDGET DEBATE (Third Day of Debate)

The Speaker: So now, as previously announced, we will move on to continuing debate on the budget. So the budget debate standing in the name of the honourable member for McPhillips, who has 17 minutes remaining.

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): I'll just pick up where I left off yesterday talking about this—the Budget 2026 being a budget of good jobs, lower costs and better health care. And I was mentioning yesterday that I had a conversation with a constituent in the morning about some of the expenses of day-to-day living, whether you're going to the pump and you're filling up on gas—[interjection] I can hear the member across the way heckling right now. He hates—absolutely hates it when Manitobans get a break at the pump.

But on this side of the House, we know that Manitobans deserve a government that's looking out for them. That's why we cut the 'das'—gas tax for an entire year and introduced a permanent 10 per cent gas tax cut for Manitobans, which we're really proud of. But it didn't stop there. There were a whole host of measures in this budget that we had introduced, continuing to fight some of the day-to-day expenses that Manitobans face, and, particularly, the one that I know everybody on this side of the House is super proud of, is the removal of PST on groceries.

And this is something that I—like I was saying yesterday, having a conversation with a constituent of mine and the feedback from him was: This is a really, really good step. You know, everybody's got to eat, everybody's got to go grocery shop, and I think if we can do something to help Manitobans, that we should take that step.

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) made the mention of this a few days ago that, oftentimes, governments will

say that there's not very much that can be done to combat food inflation. There are, I guess, limited levers that governments can pull on this, but the fact of the matter is that this government has been pulling on whatever lever is available to it to help reduce those costs as a grocery store. So the introduction of legislation to increase competition in the grocery store sector to reduce prices is something that we've been really steadfastly pursuing, and now to add to that the removal of the PST on grocery stores—or on groceries, I think, is another thing that's going to help with Manitobans.

But I was mentioning yesterday that the increase in the homeowners' tax—the affordability tax credit—to \$1,700 a year, I think—is something that Manitobans are really going to appreciate, as well as tax credit for renters, support for seniors, free transit for youth and doing all this while still investing in good jobs for Manitobans.

So creating a \$10-million Churchill plus catalyst fund to unlock private-sector investments in Churchill. This is extremely, extremely important for Manitoba and the question of turning Manitoba from a have-not province to a have province. And I'm really proud of the work that this government's been doing in pursuing investments in Churchill and unlocking the potential that Churchill has for Manitobans for the future.

And, of course, the investments in health care continue as well: 4,054 net-new health-care staff added to the front lines. And there's more investments coming to St. Boniface and the cardiac centre—re-establishing the centre that was closed under the opposition.

And so making all these investments and responding to what Manitobans are asking of this government, I think, is obviously really welcome and really important, but to be able to do that and present a budget that has the lowest deficit of any budget across Canada is truly remarkable. And reducing the debt-servicing costs that this—that, unfortunately, taxpayers are on the hook for.

But this government is reducing those costs and reducing the weight—or the penalty to Manitobans and still making life more affordable for Manitobans and investing in health care. So it's really a remarkable feat. And you hear the opposition talk about adding \$1 billion more to the deficit and really rocking the finances of our province for a political ploy, something that, I guess, got cooked up by some political hack in the back rooms there, but not a real serious proposal.

And that contrasts with what we've seen in Budget 2026, which is real action, real tangible ways for Manitobans to save, real tangible ways to help Manitobans through the cost-of-living difficulties and while still being good stewards of the Manitoba finances, which is something that I'm—I can't say enough, that I'm really proud to stand on a team that takes that very seriously, unlike what we saw with the previous government that left us with a \$2-billion massive deficit when we came into government in 2023.

* (11:10)

So, Honourable Speaker, I'm really proud to speak to this budget, and I know there's a lot of good things in here for all Manitobans. This really is—there's really something in here for every single Manitoban.

Mr. Diljeet Brar, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

But I do want to just make a note of the fact that the folks in my part of the province, in northwest Winnipeg and the surrounding area, also seeing those investments with three new schools slated to be constructed just within my constituency alone. So right now we've got the school in Aurora which will have new child-care space, and I believe that's going to be opening up later this year. We just broke ground on the new school in Meadowlands a few weeks ago, also with additional child care; and then, down the road, we're going to have a new school in Highland Pointe.

And I'm mentioning this because it's so critical in a part of the province and a part of the city that's seen so much growth in the last decade; but, unfortunately, public infrastructure and public investments did not keep pace and so now, we're doing that work to catch up to it.

And I hear a lot from my constituents about child care. We've got a lot of young families who live in my constituency and, obviously, we know child care can be a barrier for folks entering into the workforce, particularly women. So child care is critically important—that we make these investments and have those spaces ready for them.

So this government is aggressively pursuing new child-care spaces for Manitobans, which is going to allow more Manitobans to get into the workforce and to grow our economy. So I know that my constituents are particularly excited for that, and I'm really happy to see this government is continuing to pursue those investments.

But all in all, fantastic budget. I'm going to cap my remarks here and let my colleagues speak to how wonderful this budget is, on both sides. It seems like the PCs have no shortage of wonderful things to say about this budget. You're doing wonderful work, I wish we had done this, is what I'm hearing constantly. So I'm going to cede the floor to my colleagues here to tell us more about how awesome this budget is.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I'm grateful, as always, for the opportunity to get up and speak to the amendment put forward by my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Khan), to speak in favour of the amendment and to point out some of the many flaws in the NDP's budget that necessitated this amendment.

But I do want to start my comments by, first of all, thanking the people of the Roblin constituency, the people of Charleswood and Headingley. Every meeting that I have in my constituency office, every door that I knock on, every event that I attend, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with my constituents and to hear more about their priorities and the issues that matter to them. That's what we're here for. We are here to serve our constituents and to bring their issues forward to this Legislature, and their phone calls, their emails, those conversations help me to do my job better.

And so it's some of those issues that I want to bring forward in my comments today because I think, for the most part, the people of Charleswood and Headingley and the people of west Winnipeg have been largely abandoned in this budget. Some of the issues that the member for McPhillips (MLA Devgan) was speaking about just before me also matter to the people of west Winnipeg, but they're not getting any action from the NDP.

I do want to talk specifically about child care because this is something that I hear about. I'm going to say it's currently the No. 1 issue I'm hearing about from my constituents in Charleswood and Headingley. Thousands of kids in my constituency are on wait-lists for child care. I'm a working parent myself. I know first-hand how stressful it is to be on those wait-lists and to not know if you're going to have child care in place in order to work.

Some of us are lucky and we can find family supports or other arrangements, but for too many Manitoba families, a lack of access to child care

means that someone in the family can't go back to work, which has huge financial implications for their household, but it also has a lasting impact on Manitoba's economy. We are dealing with workforce shortages across many sectors. Manitoba businesses need their employees in their jobs, and in order for them to do that, they need access to child care.

I looked through the budget. I looked for the word Charleswood, I looked for the word Headingley. It's not there. When it comes to child care, there is nothing promised. The previous PC government had signed with the federal government agreements to expand child-care spaces at two schools in my constituency: Beaverlodge and Westgrove. They are sorely needed child-care spaces, but this government dropped the ball and hasn't moved forward with those spaces and hasn't made it clear, despite multiple letters that my constituents and I have written to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Schmidt) with no response.

It is not clear what the NDP government's plan is. They have added zero spaces to Charleswood and Headingley, and this budget promises nothing for them. It's a huge problem for families in my constituency, and I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't bring that concern forward here on the floor of the Legislature today.

Members in this Legislature will be very familiar as well with Phoenix School, another project that's incredibly important to my constituency that was left out of this budget. I read this petition at every opportunity in the Legislature where I talk about Phoenix School, which is the only elementary school in the community of Headingley. It's bursting at the seams. I love to go in there for I Love to Read Month every year and for other events, but it's clear that they are out of space.

And the previous PC government understood that. They approved a project to proceed for a new gymnasium, a couple new classrooms, a new multi-purpose room, a renovation and expansion project. They're not asking for a new school. They like the school they have. They just need it to be bigger and to better meet the needs of one of the fastest growing communities in Manitoba. And, again, this NDP government came into power and they cut it. They sent a letter to the school division saying, oh, we're going to defer that project, and there's been no word since.

The number one priority of the entire St. James-Assiniboia School Division is Phoenix School in

Headingley, and it's being ignored by this NDP government. I searched the budget. I thought—every year before the budget, I think: This is going to be the year. And I talk to the families in Headingley and I say: I'm—you know, we've pushed, I'm sure they're listening, they keep saying they're listening, I'm sure they're going to move forward with this project. But they don't.

It defies belief, honourable deputy Speaker, that this NDP government calls themselves a listening government but so willingly ignores the needs of Manitobans.

Property taxes are another issue that's impacting people in Charleswood and Headingley. And I want to pull up some numbers here because I want to make sure I get these right. The changes to property tax rebates put forward by this government do not benefit the people of Charleswood and Headingley. Homeowners in Charleswood are about to be hit with a whopping 9.9 per cent increase to their education property taxes, and the measures put forward in this budget do not help them.

The reason that that property tax increase is coming on their education property taxes is because this NDP government is underfunding education in Pembina Trails. They gave Pembina Trails a funding increase of 0.9 per cent. It doesn't even account for inflation. It doesn't meet the division's needs. And the superintendent, Shelley Amos, was very clear about that. She said publicly that the NDP government's decision to underfund the division was going to mean either increases to local taxation or cuts to programming. And nobody wants to see cuts to programming in our schools. So the school division has had no choice but to jack up property taxes.

But the NDP government refuses to accept responsibility for that. They prefer to hide behind the municipalities that have to collect the tax and the school divisions that have to impose the tax. Those are decisions that are going to have a direct impact on the household budgets of families in my constituency.

And it's incredibly disappointing that—the way—it's actually—it was funny, honourable deputy Speaker. The way that this Premier (Mr. Kinew) and the Finance Minister were teasing property tax relief before the budget was released, I think people really thought it was going to be substantive. It wasn't. It was such—it was like a deflating balloon for Manitobans who saw the supposed property tax relief they were getting and then compared it to the property tax relief they were getting under the previous PC government.

It is a tax hike for families in my constituency. But this NDP government doesn't care about them.

And another way that this budget has failed my constituents in Charleswood and Headingley is its complete ignorance of the needs of small businesses. And I touched on this in question period today, but, you know, you only get 45 seconds to ask a question in question period.

* (11:20)

So I want to elaborate on this a little bit for members today. Small businesses make up 97.8 per cent of businesses in Manitoba. They are the economic drivers of this province, and they were completely ignored by this NDP government's budget. You know, the minister got up today and he talked about security rebates. That's not going to cut it.

Small businesses put forward a list of priorities for this government in advance of budget because, again, they say they're listening. I mean, they held budget consultations a month before the budget dropped, so I'm going to go ahead and assume the budget was already printed when the consultations were being held.

But they held consultations, so small businesses had that opportunity to come and say, these are our priorities. And the NDP government said, yes, yes, yes, we're listening—and then completely ignored them and left it all out of the budget.

Let me tell you what the budget didn't do: It didn't provide any relief on the payroll tax, it didn't increase the corporate income tax threshold to better match our neighbours, it didn't reverse the NDP's damaging changes to apprenticeship ratios, it didn't do anything to reduce red tape or to improve regulatory accountability.

And I know that, to members opposite, those are just words, but to small-business owners, those represent a real tangible cost to their bottom line. And this NDP government took Manitoba from being the best in the country for red tape reduction and regulatory accountability.

There's a report card put out annually by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, an organization that the government likes to quote when they're saying something that they like but denigrates at every other opportunity. CFIB gave Manitoba an F on red tape reduction and regulatory accountability. Under the previous government, they were top in the

country. In just two years under this government, what a fall and what a cost to small businesses.

Because small businesses often don't—they don't have a compliance department. They don't have an HR department. They don't have somebody whose only job is to make sure they're complying with all of this government's regulations.

It's typically the proprietor—the small-business owner, themselves—who's also the head of customer service, who's also the head of finance, who's often, you know, the head purchaser, who's in charge of everything, is also in charge of making sure that they're complying with all of this government's regulations.

And this government gutted—they actually repealed regulatory accountability legislation, and the report they put out on, quote, regulatory accountability, this year, was an absolute joke. It meant nothing for small businesses in our community.

So all of these failures for small businesses. The result of this has been that we have seen, under this NDP government, six consecutive quarters where small-business exits have outpaced new business starts in Manitoba. Businesses are literally fleeing this province.

And when you consider that they make up almost 98 per cent of the businesses in this province, that spells trouble for Manitoba. It spells trouble for our economy. It spells trouble for jobs. And it spells trouble for our communities because, let's not forget, small businesses, they are—their presence in our communities matters.

Storefront businesses, they are the ones who are sponsoring the hockey tournaments and the pancake breakfasts and the fall festivals in our communities—it's small businesses. It's not Loblaws; it's not Walmart; it's not Costco. It's the local insurance company, it's the local grocery store who—and, by the way, the only so-called meagre affordability measure put forward in this budget completely excluded small businesses and restaurants. I don't know if that was just some kind of oversight or mistake because the Premier (Mr. Kinew) seemed legitimately caught off guard when he was asked by reporters about it.

But, yes, the only pitiful, meagre so-called affordability measure put forward in this budget completely excludes small businesses, which is interesting because a lot of the—what you would call a food desert in Manitoba, a place where there isn't a nearby

large grocery store—a lot of those are represented by NDP MLAs.

And so they must be aware that in order for Manitobans to access those meagre savings, they need to find a way to get themselves to one of the big grocery stores. In many cases, they can't do that. They're going to their local corner store where they are not going to be able to access the pitiful pennies of savings that this government has offered them. It doesn't make any sense.

Restaurants, similarly—and restaurants have taken such a hit over the last few years, honourable deputy Speaker, between COVID and workforce challenges and the hurdles put in place by this NDP government. For them to be completely left out of this budget, as well, is just unconscionable.

I have a few other things I want to talk about with this budget. Let me just find my notes.

I want to talk about some of the things I would have liked to have seen in this budget that simply weren't there, and I'd be remiss if I didn't touch on health care.

Manitobans are dealing with some of the highest wait times in Canada: highest ER wait times, longest waits for diagnostic tests and surgeries. And I thought it was really interesting that this budget completely left out diagnostic imaging and testing. There was nothing in this budget to address the fact that so many Manitobans, thousands of Manitobans, are on wait-lists for ultrasounds, MRIs, CT scans, mammograms, and there's nothing in this budget to address that. Diagnostics is the bridge between knowing something's wrong and getting the care that you need. And if you can't get the tests that you need, you can't get the treatment that you need. And that was completely left out of this budget.

One of the other issues that I hear about regularly from my constituents in Charleswood and Headingley is home care. And it was paid lip service at best in this budget, honourable deputy Speaker; I think there was one sentence about home care. Let me explain why that's important. Home care has a direct effect on ER wait times. If you've got Manitoba patients in hospital waiting to be discharged into the community, but they require the support of home care, they can't leave the hospital without that support. Right now, they're finding that that support is not available.

Weekly, I hear from both home-care clients, I hear from their families and I hear from home-care workers themselves who tell me that there are

hundreds of people who have been assessed as needing home care in the WRHA and haven't yet received a visit from a home-care worker. We're talking for things like compression stocking removal, for showers; for really basic care, they can't get it.

And this—the NDP just left it completely out of the budget. It doesn't make any sense, honourable deputy Speaker. This is the same government that made really terrible scheduling changes to the way the WRHA schedules home care about a year ago. And it doesn't sound like a big deal until you realize that it caused absolute chaos in home care in the WRHA.

And the fact that there's nothing in this budget to undo that damage is a real problem. We saw that thousands of home-care visits were cancelled across Winnipeg. Home-care clients couldn't anticipate who would be coming to their house or when, so they're getting a different home-care worker arriving every day, which is not good for workers, and it's definitely not good for patients. Particularly if you're dealing with a client who's got dementia, that continuity of care is really important.

The Home Care program can't function the way this NDP government is requiring it to function. It's bad for patients, it's bad for families who have to step in and fill in the gaps.

You know, you talk about the sandwich generation, people who have young kids at home and aging parents and constantly having to fill in for a failing NDP Home Care program, it's not sustainable. Particularly when you consider the demographics of Manitoba and the way that our population is aging, the lack of attention to community-based care in this budget was really concerning.

It's also important to remember that three hospitals remain greylisted in Manitoba right now. Those are thousands of health-care workers who have chosen to condemn the inaction of this NDP government when it comes to safety and security issues. That is something that this NDP government owns. These greylistings have happened under their watch.

And it was really interesting to watch the Minister of Health go out and complain about this, and basically say, oh, this is just a tactic—and this is close to a direct quote—this is just a tactic that the unions employ when the NDP is in power.

How dismissive is that? This is a government that calls themselves—we're a listening government, they say; they say it at every turn. But when thousands of health-care workers condemn their inaction, they

dismiss it as a union tactic. That's not a listening government. And that says that's—that doesn't even touch on the impact this has on Manitoba patients because if nurses don't feel safe going to work, nurses aren't going to take shifts at those facilities. Who pays the price? Patients do.

And I think the fact that those three hospitals—that's unprecedented in Manitoba history, by the way, for three hospitals to be greylisted at the same time. One of those greylistings dates back to August of last year, months ago. The fact that those greylistings remain in place tells me that this NDP government has not yet addressed the issues put forward by the unions. That should've been the top priority for health care in this budget, and it wasn't.

* (11:30)

Again, they re-announced a few things. This—the whole health section of the budget is heavily padded with re-announcements of things they say they're going to do, but they haven't done yet.

So I think when it comes to health care, I'm certainly taking a I'll-believe-it-when-I-see-it approach to some of what this government says they're going to do. And I think Manitobans are wise to do the same, because they're dealing with situations where their loved ones are waiting, in some cases for life-saving treatment. And, unfortunately, honourable deputy Speaker, we've seen cases over the last several months where Manitobans have actually died waiting for the care that they need. No Manitoban should be in that situation.

We on this side of the House have proposed some ideas to help prevent that from happening. One of those is Debbie's law, which the NDP have blocked at every opportunity. And it doesn't make any sense to me, because all that it would do is require the government to let people know if they're not going to get the life-saving care that they need in time so that they can pursue options elsewhere and save their own lives. And the NDP government won't even do that. There's no mention of that in this year's budget either.

The Speaker in the Chair

As a Winnipeg-based MLA, I also just, before my time runs out, want to briefly mention the importance of the North End Water Pollution Control Centre, NEWPCC, and how this government has left it out of the budget. And it's so funny to get up in question period and ask these ministers and this Premier (Mr. Kinew), well, if you're doing it, where is it in the budget? They can't point to it because it's not there.

I have combed through all 147 pages of this budget. The most important capital project to Manitoba's largest city, where 75 per cent of Manitobans live, is not in this budget.

And really, Honourable Speaker, that is indicative of what this budget is. It is not reflective of the priorities of Manitobans, and that's why I support the amendment put forward by my colleague.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Shannon Corbett (Transcona): Honourable Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to put a few words on the record regarding Budget 2026. Good jobs, lower costs and better health care.

While the other side went on a slash-and-burn tour when they were in power, our government went on a listening tour. By listening to our constituents and being accessible to everyone across the province, we are better informed to come up with a budget that works for everyone: one Manitoba.

Our goal has always been to work with Manitobans to unite our province, not to reward our friends and create a province that is divided. Every budget is, at its core, a statement of values. It tells Manitobans what matters to their government. And this budget makes one thing unmistakably clear: We believe in investing in people. And investing in children is one of the best investments we can make in our province's future.

Honourable Speaker, I'm going to focus my words today on the education aspect of the budget. Prior to being elected to this role, I was a teacher for 30 years. I was a teacher, a consultant for students with additional needs and an administrator. I've worked with students from kindergarten to grade 12, and when I think about the seven and a half years when the opposition was in power, I think about the harm they did to the education system and the damage they did to everyone working in education. Morale was at an all-time low, staff were laid off and children suffered.

As the member for Seine River (MLA Cross) talked about, I, too, remember running out of paper at school, running out of school supplies, even the MAGA-red crayons. But, as teachers do, we made the best of a horrible situation. I hope the education system never has to suffer like that again.

When we talk about the future of Manitoba, we are really talking about our children, who they will

become, the opportunities available to them and the kind of province we choose to build around them. This belief guides many decisions in Budget 2026. It is why we are investing in children at every stage of their lives, from early learning to K-to-12 education, to community recreation, to lifelong learning. Not in isolation, but as a part of a connected system that supports families, strengthens communities and builds opportunity for everyone.

Honourable Speaker, education is the foundation of opportunity. It is where children discover who they are, what they're capable of, and how they can contribute to the world around them. That is why this budget increases school funding by \$80 million, representing—*[interjection]*—yes, \$80 million—representing a 3.5 per cent increase and, importantly, the third consecutive year in which school funding has increased above inflation. That consistency matters. It means school divisions can plan for the future rather than scramble to keep up. It means schools have the resources they need to respond to growing enrolment, rising costs and the diverse needs of students without sacrificing quality of support.

But education is not just about funding classrooms; it is also about making sure we have the right buildings in the right places. Manitoba is growing, and families are 'chooting'—choosing to put down roots in communities across the province. Budget 2026 represents response to that growth by moving forward with 11 new schools, supported by \$118 million in capital funding for the first four projects.

These are not schools built for yesterday's population. In fact, schools like Devonshire Park and Prairie Pointe are being expanded from the original 650 students to 800-student capacity, reflecting the needs of fast-growing neighbourhoods. This is about planning ahead, not falling behind, and ensuring that parents can be confident their children will have a place in their community school.

Of course, a school is only as strong as the people inside of it. That is why this government has focused heavily on staffing and student supports all across this great province. Over the past two years alone, we have added 832 teachers, 577 educational assistants and support staff and 72 clinicians to Manitoba schools. These investments mean more individual attention for students, more inclusive classrooms and better mental health and learning supports. They mean fewer students falling through the cracks and more students reaching their full potential.

Honourable Speaker, supporting children also means supporting families. Every parent understands the pressure of rising costs, and raising a child should not feel out-of-overwhelming or out of reach. That is why our universal school nutrition program is such an important part of this budget. Over the past year, our program delivered over 30 million meals and snacks, reaching more than 93,000 students every single day.

This program does more than fill stomachs. It reduces pressure on family budgets, improves student focus and attendance and ensures that every child, regardless—regardless of their community or circumstances, can start the day ready to learn. That is not charity. That is smart, preventative policy.

This budget also makes 'tranjit'—transit free for kids and youth. When you think about the cost of daily bus fares over a month, over a school year, that adds up quickly. Our measure puts that money back into families' pockets and eases pressure on household budgets right away. It also removes a barrier for some of our students to attend school.

We are also expanding access—access to affordable, high-quality child care. Budget 2026 supports 21 new child-care centres and more than 2,300 new spaces, including a new \$10-a-day child-care centre with 80 spaces right here in Winnipeg. Affordable child care is not a luxury; it is an essential infrastructure. It allows parents to work, to pursue education and to participate fully in the economy. It strengthens families and helps build a more inclusive workforce.

But, Honourable Speaker, child care only works when the people who provide it are respected, supported and fairly compensated. That is why, following last year's historic \$5-an-hour wage-grid increase, this budget increases wages for early childhood educators by another 2 per cent.

Honourable Speaker, these are not abstract investments. From March 2023 to February 2026, Manitoba's licensed child-care workforce has grown by 40 per cent, with 1,118 more early childhood educators now working in the system. We are also expanding the \$5,000 recruit-back incentive, which more than 800 educators have already received.

* (11:40)

That is how you build a sustainable system, not by making promises, but by making sure there are qualified, dedicated professionals caring for our children every day.

Honourable Speaker, childhood is not only about academics; it is also about play, exploration and physical activity. For the first time, new schools in Manitoba will be built with playgrounds included, eliminating the fundraising burdens that too often fall on parents and school communities. And because existing schools matter just as much, we are launching a new healthy kids, healthy communities fund, supporting playgrounds and play structures across Manitoba. Safe, accessible spaces to play are essential to healthy development, and this budget recognizes that.

Beyond school grounds, our government is investing in the places where kids gather, build friendships and stay connected to positive activities. Through From the Ground Up funding, we have invested in 58 hockey rinks and ice surfaces; eight pools and aquatic facilities; 66 playgrounds, parks and green spaces; and 104 recreation programs. These spaces do more than host activities. They build connections, foster belonging and keep young people engaged in their communities after school, on weekends and throughout the year.

Honourable Speaker, this budget also acknowledges a truth long understood by many communities: education must reflect identity, culture and belonging. For many youth who are Indigenous, success in education is deeply connected to access to culture, language and traditional ways of knowing. That is why our government continues to invest in healing lodges and land-based education initiatives.

In partnership with Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, we anticipate the opening—we anticipate opening the Thompson youth healing lodge in '26-27, providing culturally appropriate supports and traditional teachings for children in the North. The goal is clear: to reduce the over-representation of youth who are Indigenous in custody by addressing root causes, strengthening identity and offering a better path forward.

Unlike the members opposite during their seven and a half years of failure, this government will not leave children behind. We refuse to accept underfunded schools, overwhelmed classrooms or families left to carry costs on their own. We know that children are Manitoba's future and we are prepared to act on that belief.

This is what it looks like to believe that children are our future, not as a slogan but as a governing principle, as a set budget of choices, as commitments backed by real dollars, real people, real spaces and

real opportunities. And that is exactly what Budget 2026 delivers.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): You know, it was interesting, the—after listening to the budget speech which, as some of my colleagues have said and we've heard from Manitobans in the days since, was incredibly underwhelming. The government certainly had us primed for something big, and then you listen to the budget speech and there's literally nothing in there. There's not even numbers in there. It just fell—it fell absolutely flat.

It was big, big nothing burger at the very best, and there were some really concerning elements in there at the very worst, but, namely, when it comes to taxes and our deficit and the trajectory that this NDP government has put Manitoba on when it comes to economic growth.

But it was interesting, as I was saying, reading the reaction in the Winnipeg Free Press of all the people that they talked to, some of the stakeholders who you would think would be friends of this NDP government, and just to read their reactions.

For instance, Doctors Manitoba. Dr. Nichelle Desilets said that, we were—we are disappointed. The government's budget included no signs of fulfilling their election promise to add 250 team-based providers in physician practices. Again, that's from Doctors Manitoba, Dr. Nichelle Desilets, someone who the Health Minister enjoyed quoting here from time to time. And yet this is the reaction from Doctors Manitoba, is one of disappointment at a failed election promise put forward by this NDP government nearly three years ago.

Here's a quote, here's a reaction from Margaret Schroeder from CUPE 204 who said, and I quote: One nurse to 50 patients is unacceptable, but nurses aren't working alone. Health-care aides and dietary aides are doing hands-on patient care every single day and are consistently short-staffed.

Here's another one, this one from Kate Kehler, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. Quote: We're investing more in health care because we don't invest in eradicating poverty. If we eradicated poverty, that would actually have the most positive impact on the health-care system.

Here's one from the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, from AMM, Kathy Valentino, the president, who said, and I quote: I have mixed

reactions and disappointment in the lack of increase in investment for water and waste water infrastructure projects in the province. We've heard loud and clear from municipalities that they are ready to grow, but with no increase in water and waste water infrastructure, they won't be able to grow. End quote.

And I can wholeheartedly support that sentiment as someone representing the Pembina Valley region, an area where we get most of our water from the Pembina Valley Water Co-op, which draws its water from the Red River in increasingly—you know, I don't know if I can say unreliable at this point, but it—there are serious concerns about the—about water security and about the reliability of the Red River as a water source for the growing Pembina Valley region.

And the Pembina Valley Water Co-op has been advocating for investments in the Letellier water treatment plant for many years, and I was happy under our PC government to help and join in those lobbying efforts and to secure more than \$13 million in upgrades, in provincial dollars, for upgrades to the Letellier water treatment plant. Again, something we didn't see in this year's budget. Not a single mention of the Pembina Valley and not a mention of water and waste water infrastructure projects.

And of course, Mayor Gillingham, as the mayor of Winnipeg, has made his concerns clear about the lack of a mention for the North End Sewage Treatment Plant. And here's Winnipeg mayor Scott Gillingham on the topic of water and waste water and the lack of any support by this NDP government in their budget. He said he was disappointed in this budget at there was no—as there was no mention of the North End Sewage Treatment Plant. Quote: If we don't get that project built—again, this is the mayor—if we don't get that project built, fully funded and built within the next few years, we're going to have to put a complete stop on all future growth. There'll be no more housing developed, there'll be no more jobs created because no more businesses will be able to set up shop. End quote, said Gillingham.

So what's interesting is, when the PCs were in power, we funded the first two phases of the North End treatment plant. Now that the City is looking at the third phase, this NDP government is nowhere to be found. They have put nothing up to support that third phase, that critical third phase.

And again, we see the short sightedness of this NDP government, the mayor raising the prospect of no more jobs created and no more businesses being able to set up shop because of a failure to fund—on the

part of this NDP government—to fund the third phase of the North End treatment plant.

So, you know, as I said, it was interesting to read the reaction of Manitobans, Manitoba stakeholders, leaders in our economy and, you know, even some of those, as I said, who the—this NDP government like to quote and pretend that these are their friends. And yet, you know, one word was consistent all the way throughout, and that was disappointment. So many stakeholders, so many Manitobans felt that this budget was just a major disappointment.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation: Manitobans haven't forgotten that the Premier (Mr. Kinew), this NDP Premier, hiked their income taxes last year with bracket creep while he keeps borrowing more money. The government needs to provide real tax relief instead of painting over tax hikes with inadequate measures that leave taxpayers worse off overall. That's the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

* (11:50)

We had an NDP minister across the way, the so-called Business Minister, talking about, you know, supports for business. And it's interesting, because I'm not sure that he's aware, but this is what Chuck Davidson, president of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, had to say. He said, quote: We were looking for a little bit more. We would have liked to have seen some measures as well for businesses.

So in general, here's another good one: this is Kyle Ross, another one of the—someone who should be a friend of the—this NDP government, and yet is disappointed in the work that they're doing. This is Kyle Ross, president of the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union, who said: We've advocated pretty hard for our issues in corrections and wildland firefighters. We've seen a sprinkling of that but overall, our workers are doing more with less continually, and we're not really seeing any advancement in bringing in people to do this work. That's from Kyle Ross, saying that this government, as a result of this NDP government, we're, quote: not really seeing any advancement in bringing in people to do this work.

So it doesn't matter what side of the political spectrum you're on, I think we can all agree in Manitoba that this truly was a terrible, terrible budget. You know, and I think most Manitobans were left asking, where is the affordability relief that so many of us are looking—so many Manitoba families are looking for?

The reason why Manitoba families are struggling to put food on the table and to make ends meet at the end of the month is because of the unbearable tax burden caused by this NDP. They have jacked up education property taxes, and those skyrocketing education property taxes and higher income taxes are making life unaffordable for Manitoba families. Statistics Canada says, in Manitoba, education and property taxes have increased by 20 per cent from 2025 to 2026; 20 per cent in one year—a 20 per cent education property tax hike in one year.

And while they talk about their flat tax credit going up by 100 bucks, that's only a 6 per cent increase. So they're effectively taking \$200 with one hand and giving back \$100 with the other. And so at the end of the day, Manitobans are left with less and less of their hard-earned dollars.

PST on groceries—there's already no PST on virtually all groceries. Only prepared meals, foods and snacks have PST. So that means that a family of four might save 10 bucks a month on pop, chips and ice cream, but that's not real affordability. And we've been calling, in this Chamber, for real income tax relief. That's what we need in Manitoba. We have some of the highest taxes in Canada, certainly this side of Quebec.

And so we have put forward a resolution calling on the government to increase the basic personal exemption to \$30,000, from \$15,000, where it is today. This would provide immediate affordability relief to low- and medium-income earners. And that would result in \$1,500 per year in income tax savings for Manitobans, \$3,000 a year for families.

Some other concerns in the budget: It's interesting that now federal transfers account for 36 per cent of all provincial revenues. So that's almost \$10 billion; that's \$9.6 billion out of a \$27-billion provincial budget comes to us from the federal government. That is a—man, that is a flashing check engine light on the dashboard of our economy, if there ever was one.

You know, when we're not growing our economy, when Manitobans are leaving—to fleeing this NDP government's tax hikes and regulatory burden and the growing red tape and bureaucracy and the all talk and no action, Manitobans are getting—at least those that can afford to—are getting out of here. Unfortunately, those who can't are stuck under the burden of this NDP government.

But, you know, that's—when the economy is not growing, income tax and corporate income tax

revenues aren't growing either; sales tax revenues aren't growing. And so you're actually not—you're not bringing in the money that you need to provide the social services that Manitobans depend on, like health care, and that's a huge concern. So they're taking us exactly in the wrong direction.

When it comes to health care, and we've talked about this, but you know, Manitobans certainly know what it's like to be—to have to go to an ER today. You know, under this NDP government, health care has gotten worse. We're facing record health-care wait-times, hip and knee surgeries, cataract, all the rest of it: diagnostics, MRI wait-times are stretched into not only weeks, but months and actually years. I have so many constituents come to me complaining that it's taking—they've been waiting for years. And then when they find out, oh, somehow they're not on the list, or they—something happened, and so they wait years just to get on a list, just to wait longer.

It's this run around that they're being given in our health-care system, you know, really, thanks to the—this NDP government's mismanagement of our health-care system. And so, you know, again, as I said, those Manitobans that can afford to do so, they go and get their hip and knee surgeries done in Arizona while they're on vacation there, and they get it done right away. And then they come back and they say, boy, am I glad I did that; I was waiting for a year or two. I've been waiting forever, getting nowhere, no prospect of getting medical attention, and here I was able to go. So that's a pretty stinging indictment of where this NDP government has left our health-care system.

But sadly, as well, the deaths of four Manitobans, you know, in the last number of months, waiting in an ER. And I think that's something that resonates deeply with Manitobans because we all know the concern when you go in with a loved one, whether it's a child or a parent or a spouse—someone who needs medical attention in a real immediate fashion, and then you're told to wait in the waiting room. And you wait for hours and hours and hours and don't get medical attention.

That's the record of this NDP government. And the reality is they promised they would fix it. They acted like they had all the answers. They had all the answers in the 2023 election. And they've—in that—in the three years since, have done literally nothing. And, in fact, they've made it worse.

So the economy's in worse shape, our unemployment rate is higher, taxes are higher, Manitobans are

finding it harder and harder to make ends meet and health-care wait-times are longer.

And by the way, now that it's springtime, I mean, you drive our roads? Like, our roads are—it's a hellscape out there. They're so riddled with potholes and everything else. And, you know, it's like the damage that it's doing to our vehicles. In the middle of an affordability crisis, when you hit these potholes, and I mean, not only do you damage your tires, but there's all kind of like, some of these potholes, you know, could rip an entire axle right off of your car. And this is what you're trying to swerve around here in the city.

When I was on St. Mary's the other day going home, and that is one horrible street. Pembina, you know. Then there's out my way, Highway 14, which is an incredibly oversubscribed highway; a lot of commercial truck traffic on that one. Highway 75 is a perennial disaster. But infrastructure—they've been in power for three years now, and, you know, Chris Lorenc of Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, the president there, has made it very clear that our infrastructure budget should be at \$1.2 billion annually, and it's stuck at \$500 million a year.

And look at what Manitobans are getting for their tax dollars. We're spending all of this money and getting what? Longer health-care wait-times, terrible infrastructure and in an economy that is increasingly in dire trouble.

* (12:00)

So all of these things, again, point to a major disappointment. This budget was a major miss. This NDP government has the reins of power right now. You know, they have the ability to do something, to roll back that tax and regulatory burden on Manitobans, to build, to actually build. Instead, when they got elected, what did they do? They cancelled the construction of six personal-care homes. They cancelled the construction of 14 schools.

These were all—again, six personal-care homes, 14 schools—put forward by the previous PC government. They came in, their first act was to cancel that. They cancelled the surgical and diagnostic task force, which was reducing wait times and shrinking the wait-lists for key surgical and diagnostic procedures.

So they did a lot of damage in their first couple of days and they had an opportunity this week in their budget to try to climb out of that hole; to put down the shovel, to stop digging and grab a ladder and try to

climb out of that hole. And they entirely missed that opportunity.

So with all of that said, Speaker–Honourable Speaker, again, a major disappointment. We've heard from Manitobans about this budget: incredibly underwhelming and a major missed opportunity to address the very real challenges facing Manitoba families, small businesses, farmers. And so as a result, I will be voting no to this budget.

French spoken

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): Il me fait chaud au cœur d'avoir l'opportunité de parler au sujet de notre Budget 2026, qui a été mis de l'avant par une équipe incroyable, avec un Premier ministre (M. Kinew) le plus populaire au Canada et un ministre des Finances (DAL Sala) qui est outillé, capable, très compétent, et qui est à l'écoute des Manitobains et des Manitobaines, qui est à l'écoute de nos familles, qui est à l'écoute de nos aînés et qui est à l'écoute de nos enseignants, de nos écoles.

Et je suis fier d'être capable ce matin de parler de ce budget, mais je trouve plutôt rigolo d'entendre les Conservateurs râler, se plaindre, chialer au sujet d'un budget qu'ils savent qui est incroyable et qui d'ailleurs va mettre de l'avant des priorités qu'ils n'ont jamais été capables d'accomplir.

Donc, ce qu'ils font : ils râlent, ils se plaignent, et puis ils continuent à mettre de côté un budget qu'ils savent qui est d'ailleurs incroyable et qui, au fondement, a une priorité importante pour tous les Manitobains et les Manitobaines, et c'est le secteur de la santé.

Vous savez, il y a une semaine, malheureusement dans la famille Loiselle, on a perdu notre père. Lucien Loiselle est décédé suite à des défis cardiaques. Dans ma famille, ma mère, mon père et mon frère Richard ont passé à travers les soins cardiaques à l'hôpital de Saint-Boniface, et ce avant les coupures des Conservateurs, qui ont nui aux soins cardiaques. Et la question que je me pose aujourd'hui, c'est : est-ce que mon père serait encore en vie si les Conservateurs avaient pas annulé les soins cardiaques à l'hôpital de Saint-Boniface ?

Et je suis fier de faire partie d'une équipe qui va réinvestir aux soins cardiaques à l'hôpital de Saint-Boniface 22 millions de dollars, pour s'assurer que les Manitobains et les Manitobaines ont accès à des soins cardiaques de qualité quand ils en ont besoin.

Ma mère a eu sa première opération de cœur en 1960 à la Mayo Clinic au Minnesota, parce que, à ce temps-là, ici au Manitoba, on n'avait pas la capacité de lui donner l'opération dont elle avait besoin. Et à ce temps-là, le gouvernement Duff Roblin n'était pas prêt à payer l'opération à cœur ouvert dont ma mère avait besoin au Minnesota. Mon grand-père est allé devant le gouvernement Duff Roblin et lui a dit : allez-vous tuer ma fille ? Parce que, à ce temps-là, on n'avait pas la capacité qu'on a en ce moment.

Ma mère ensuite, en 2008, avait encore besoin d'une opération à cœur ouvert, mais heureusement que le centre cardiaque d'excellence des soins de santé existait encore à l'hôpital de Saint-Boniface.

Ce n'est plus le cas. Il faut le rebâtir, non seulement pour les soins cardiaques des hommes, mais aussi avec un focus spécial sur le soin cardiaque pour les femmes. C'est ce que les Manitobains et les Manitobaines s'attendent de leur gouvernement, un gouvernement qui est à l'écoute, qui prend soin des aînés, qui prend soin de nos familles, qui prend soin de nos élèves dans nos écoles pour s'assurer que les écoles sont bien fournies avec les outils dont elles ont besoin. Et encore une fois, on apporte des solutions que les Conservateurs n'ont pas apportées pendant leurs sept années et demie au pouvoir.

Est-ce qu'on a doublé le financement pour le Centre culturel franco-manitobain ? Absolument. Et on continue à le faire dans ce budget.

Est-ce qu'on a ouvert un centre juridique bilingue pour les Manitobains et les Manitobaines ? Oui, on l'a fait, et on continue à le faire avec le Budget 2026.

Est-ce qu'on ouvre une nouvelle école à Saint-Boniface ? Absolument. Il faut. L'éducation en français continue à être une priorité pour notre gouvernement, mais aussi pour les familles manitobaines. Dans nos écoles de la DSFM, on retrouve environ en ce moment 6 500 élèves, et ça monte en flèche. Nos écoles sont pleines à craquer. Donc, ça nous prend d'autres écoles francophones, comme ça nous prend d'autres écoles d'immersion, d'autres écoles anglophones. Et notre gouvernement continue à bâtir des écoles. D'ailleurs, je suis très fier qu'on va bâtir une nouvelle école de la DSFM à Brandon. Bâtir de nouvelles écoles, dans nos villes rurales comme à Winnipeg, est une priorité.

Pendant mes 28 années d'enseignement, j'ai eu la chance de travailler à plusieurs niveaux : élémentaire, secondaire, pour adultes aussi. D'ailleurs, j'ai évolué pour la majorité de ma carrière dans un centre pour

adultes dans un programme qui s'appelait Youth Build pour les jeunes autochtones.

Et dans ce budget, on investit un autre 2 millions de dollars et demi pour appuyer l'éducation pour adultes. Pourquoi ? Parce qu'on sait que, quand un jeune adulte finit son secondaire, il est ensuite capable d'avancer, soit à un collège, à une université ou encore dans le domaine des métiers. On a besoin des charpentiers, des électriciens, des plombiers. On sait qu'on est une – on a présentement une pénurie de maisons, de logements au Manitoba. On a besoin d'en bâtir plus. Ça va nous prendre une main-d'œuvre bien outillée, et ce budget met de l'avant ces priorités.

Je sais aussi que, en ce moment, on a beaucoup de jeunes au Manitoba qui ont de la difficulté à se rendre à l'école. C'est pas toujours évident. Donc, dans notre budget, on continue à mettre de l'argent de l'avant pour le programme de nutrition, parce qu'on sait que, quand un jeune arrive à l'école et que, pour une raison ou une autre, il a pas eu la chance de manger quelque chose. Dans nos écoles maintenant à travers le Manitoba, on a un programme de nutrition pour s'assurer que chaque enfant a quelque chose à manger le matin, de faire en sorte qu'il est capable de s'appliquer en classe.

Notre budget avance une autre priorité : aider les jeunes élèves au Manitoba sous l'âge de 18 ans de se rendre à l'école en prenant un autobus – transit, comme on dit en anglais – et le transport en commun. Et puis, vous savez, pour un jeune, pour se rendre à l'école en autobus, en transport en commun, ça coûte environ 20 \$ par semaine. Vingt dollars, c'est beaucoup. Vingt dollars fois quatre, pour le mois, c'est 80 \$; pour l'année, c'est 800 \$.

Puis encore une fois, les Conservateurs se plaignent, râlent contre le fait qu'on va aider à rendre la vie plus abordable pour les Manitobains et les Manitobaines et les familles. Je comprends pas. Comme mon grand-père disait : ils savent pas de quoi ils parlent. Huit cents dollars par année par jeune, c'est beaucoup d'argent. Deux jeunes au secondaire, ça fait 1 600 \$.

* (12:10)

Imaginez-vous qu'est-ce qu'une famille peut faire avec 800 \$ de plus dans leur budget, 1 600 \$ de plus dans leur budget, 2 400 \$ de plus dans leur budget pour une famille de trois.

J'étais à l'École Henri-Bergeron l'autre jour. Il y a un jeune qui a dit : Monsieur – Monsieur Robert, c'est incroyable, je vais être capable d'acheter des nouveaux patins, pour jouer au hockey. Monsieur

Robert, c'est incroyable : il va peut-être avoir plus de nourriture alentour de la table à l'heure du souper. Des jeunes de sixième année – de sixième année – qui ont 12 ans ont tout de suite compris l'avantage.

Mais les Conservateurs, pour une raison ou une autre – je sais pas qu'est-ce qu'ils ont manqué en sixième année, peut-être qu'ils ont pas fini leur huitième, je le sais pas – peuvent pas comprendre ce que ça veut dire pour des jeunes familles. Pour nos aînés – parce qu'il faut jamais oublier les aînés – on a mis de l'avant 5 millions de dollars de plus s'assurer que nos aînés sont bien nourris de façon adéquate dans les centres d'âge d'or.

Alors, encore une fois, j'ai de la difficulté à comprendre pourquoi que les Conservateurs peuvent pas juste embarquer, comprendre que les élèves, les jeunes familles, les aînés, c'est une priorité. Puis si ils veulent essayer de voter contre le budget, bonne chance. Parce que les Manitobains vont pas être contents si les Conservateurs essayent de voter contre le budget. Parce que c'est un bon budget, qui est à l'écoute des priorités, des aînés, des familles, du système d'éducation, du système de la santé, et c'est un budget qui fait avancer notre province, avec empathie.

Puis encore une fois, à la mémoire de mon père, Lucien Loïselle, faut se demander : si les soins cardiaques à l'hôpital de Saint-Boniface avaient pas été démantibulés par les Conservateurs pendant leurs sept années et demie – et demie au pouvoir, faut se demander si mon père serait encore vivant aujourd'hui.

Je suis pas content. Mais je suis heureux que notre gouvernement va rebâtir les soins cardiaques à l'hôpital de Saint-Boniface pour tous les Manitobains et toutes les Manitobaines.

Merci, l'Honorable Président.

Translation

It warms my heart to have the opportunity to address our 2026 Budget, which was put forward by an incredible team, led by the most popular Premier (Mr. Kinew) in Canada and a Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) who is well-equipped, capable, highly competent, and who listens to Manitobans, who listens to families, who listens to our seniors and who listens to our teachers and our schools.

And I'm proud to be able to talk about this budget this morning, but I find it rather funny to hear the Conservatives grumbling, complaining and whining

about a budget they know is incredible and which, by the way, will advance priorities they've never been able to achieve.

So what are they doing? They're grumbling, they're complaining, and then they keep setting aside a budget that they know is, in fact, incredible and that, at its core, has a priority that is important to all Manitobans, and that is health care.

You know, a week ago, unfortunately, in the Loisselle family we lost our father. Lucien Loisselle passed away due to heart issues. In my family, my mother, my father, and my brother Richard all received cardiac care at St. Boniface Hospital, and this was before the Conservatives' cuts, which harmed cardiac care. And the question I ask myself today is: Would my father still be alive if the Conservatives hadn't cancelled cardiac care at St. Boniface Hospital?

And I'm proud to be part of a team that's reinvesting \$22 million in cardiac care at St. Boniface Hospital to ensure that Manitobans have access to quality cardiac care when they need it.

My mother had her first heart surgery in 1960 at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, because back then, here in Manitoba, we didn't have the capacity to perform the surgery she needed. And at that time, the Duff Roblin government wasn't willing to pay for the open-heart surgery my mother needed in Minnesota. My grandfather went to the Duff Roblin government and said: Are you going to kill my daughter? Because back then, we didn't have the capacity we have now. Then, in 2008, my mother needed another open heart surgery, but fortunately the Centre of Excellence in Cardiac Care still existed at St. Boniface Hospital.

That is no longer the case. We need to rebuild it, not only for men's cardiac care but also with a special focus on cardiac care for women.

This is what Manitobans expect from their government: a government that listens, that cares for seniors, that cares for our families, that cares for our students in our schools to ensure that schools are well-equipped with the tools they need. And once again, we're delivering solutions that the Conservatives failed to deliver during their seven and a half years in power.

Have we doubled funding for the Centre culturel franco-manitobain? Absolutely. And we're continuing to do so in this budget.

Did we open a bilingual legal centre for Manitobans? Yes, we did, and we're continuing to do so with Budget 2026.

Are we opening a new school in St. Boniface? Absolutely. We have to. French-language education remains a priority for our government, but also for Manitoba families. Right now, there are about 6,500 students in our DSFM schools, and that number is skyrocketing. Our schools are bursting at the seams. So we need more French-language schools, just as we need more immersion schools and more English-language schools. And our government continues to build schools. In fact, I am very proud that we are going to build a new DSFM school in Brandon. Building new schools, in our rural towns as well as in Winnipeg, is a priority.

During my 28 years of teaching, I've had the opportunity to work at various levels: elementary, secondary and with adults as well. In fact, I spent most of my career at an adult education centre in a program for Indigenous youth called Youth Build.

And in this budget, we are investing another \$2.5 million to support adult education. Why? Because we know that when a young adult finishes high school, they are then able to move forward—whether to a college, a university or into the trades. We need carpenters, electricians and plumbers. We know that we're facing—we currently have a housing shortage in Manitoba. We need to build more. That's going to require a well-trained workforce, and this budget highlights these priorities.

I also know that, right now, there are many young people in Manitoba who are struggling to get to school. It's not always easy. So, in our budget, we continue to allocate funds for the nutrition program, because we know that when a student arrives at school and, for one reason or another, hasn't had the chance to eat anything. In our schools across Manitoba now, we have a nutrition program to ensure that every child has something to eat in the morning, so that they're able to focus in class.

Our budget advances another priority: helping young students in Manitoba under the age of 18 get to school by taking a bus—transit, as we say in English—and public transit. You know, for a young person, getting to school by bus or public transit costs about \$20 a week. Twenty dollars is a lot. Twenty dollars times four, for the month, that's \$80; for the year, that's \$800.

And yet again, the Conservatives are complaining, grumbling about the fact that we're going to help make life more affordable for Manitobans and their families. I don't get it. As my grandfather used to say: They don't know what they're talking about.

Eight hundred dollars a year per child is a lot of money. Two kids in high school comes to \$1,600.

* (12:10)

Just imagine what a family can do with an extra \$800 in their budget, an extra \$1,600 in their budget, an extra \$2,400 in their budget for a family of three.

I was at École Henri-Bergeron the other day. One kid said, Mr.—Mr. Robert, this is incredible, I'll be able to buy new skates to play hockey. Mr. Robert, this is incredible: there might be more food on the table at dinnertime. Sixth-graders—sixth-graders—who are 12 years old immediately understood the benefit.

But the Conservatives, for some reason—I don't know what they missed in sixth grade, maybe they didn't finish eighth grade, I don't know—can't understand what this means for young families. For our seniors—because we must never forget our seniors—we've allocated an additional \$5 million to ensure our seniors are properly fed in senior care centres.

So, once again, I have a hard time understanding why the Conservatives can't just get on board, understand that students, young families, and seniors are a priority. And if they want to try to vote against the budget, good luck. Because Manitobans won't be happy if the Conservatives try to vote against the budget. Because it's a good budget, one that listens to priorities—seniors, families, the education system, the health-care system—and it's a budget that moves our province forward, with empathy.

And once again, in memory of my father, Lucien Loiselle, we have to ask ourselves: If cardiac care at St. Boniface Hospital hadn't been dismantled by the Conservatives during their seven and a half—and a half years in power, we have to wonder if my father would still be alive today.

I'm not happy. But I'm glad that our government is going to rebuild cardiac care at St. Boniface Hospital for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I'm happy to have the opportunity to put words on the record that, you know, will reflect this budget and what it meant

to my constituency and what it meant to the rest of Manitoba.

And I know it's been mentioned by the Brandon Sun, our local paper, the headline read: this budget was Brandon-blind. And the First Minister proceeded to chastise me for using that phrase that—although the Brandon Sun picked it up. So on his behest, I have looked—a few more words to maybe articulate this.

And so I think I can say that this budget was Brandon-blinkered, which means narrow-minded or limited vision. I could also say that this budget was Brandon-besotted, which is foolishly infatuated or unaware. Again, it could be Brandon-benighted, which is unenlightening. It could be Brandon-blocked or -obstructed, as the definition goes, but it could also be Brandon-blundered. And this is the one where I pulled out the definition that I liked the best because it says: a significant, careless or stupid mistake usually caused by ignorance, inattention or stupidity. It acts as both a noun, as a massive error; and as a verb, to make such an error or move clumsily. And its synonyms include gaffe, bungled, oversight, botched and stumbled. And those are from the Merriam-Webster dictionary, so I think all of those aptly describe how this budget was for Brandon. It was Brandon-blundered.

You know, we see announcements over and over and over again in this budget, recycled and reused, again and again, talking about issues for Brandon. Nothing in there of significant importance besides what has been reannounced from previous budgets.

The Brandon Regional Health Centre has been asking for an expansion of the emergency room to try and help them out there—its growing needs to make sure triage is better, to make sure the service to the public is better. Not one mention in the budget about this.

In this very House, I spoke about the needs of Brandon residents and how they're lining up daily for hot meals through Helping Hands. Helping Hands is a critical support for Brandon and the neighbourhoods that it serves, the communities that it serves, serving—I believe it was in the neighbourhood of 51,000 hot meals, and now they've extended that service to bagged lunches on weekends to help support the community.

These are people that are living in extreme poverty because of issues caused by the inaffordability measures of this budget. Not one penny has been put forward to Helping Hands in this budget; I'm

disappointed to say that. Nothing for a lot of the other help services in Brandon that rely on government support and, instead, they have to go back to the ratepayers and to the community for donations and charity.

It's been mentioned by my colleague from Roblin and from my other colleagues here in the Chamber that there was nothing in this budget for the small independent grocery stores and for the restaurants. It's deplorable when we look at the amount of money that is going to be going to the large conglomerates, and nothing to the independent businesses that rely on this government daily.

And their—they came to the table with nothing to offer, and that's unfortunate for each and every one of those businesses. I was hoping the goose would have come to Brandon and laid that golden egg, but a goose didn't attend in Brandon, unfortunately. There was no golden egg. There was no funds left there, and it's unfortunate for our citizens.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the amendment that's moved forward, and in its—under (i) failing to take necessary measures to restore public safety in communities across Manitoba, as this budget contains no plan to address rising property crimes or to advance reforms to the bail system aimed at keeping violent offenders and repeat criminals in custody.

When we look at the promise in the budget, the promise was 12 officers. I took a moment to break that down because of my past policing career, and in somewhere like Rivers or Victoria Beach or a smaller police service, 12 officers would be great to deploy to their areas.

Honourable Speaker, 12 officers in Manitoba equals a 0.0046 per cent increase, as there's approximately 2,582 police officers in Manitoba. So, Manitobans, get that: 0.0046 is the amount that this government is willing to spend on your safety, the amount that this government is willing to put forward for policing initiatives to keep you safe from the rising crime under this NDP government.

* (12:20)

And in—put that into another perspective, there's 1.51 million people in Manitoba. Twelve officers: that gives each one of them the responsibility for 125,833 citizens individually. This is a drop in the bucket; it's insulting and it's certainly not part of a safety plan for Manitobans. It's shameful when we look at that, the amount of pressure that is put onto the police officers and the number of people that they

interact with daily and weekly and monthly; they're interacting with people who are in the worst state that they could possibly be that day, and they're expected to do that with little to nothing from this government.

Also, within this budget we see nothing to help with our court system capacity. Right now, they are stretched so thin, they have very little resources. Cases will not only be delayed; they're going to end up collapsing. There's case law that has been put into place that Crown attorneys and the courts must follow now. And they have to have trials within 18 months, or two years for the serious offences. With our Crown attorneys stretched incredibly thin right now, with more and more pressure being put on them with digital evidence, with convoluted cases, with changing requirements because of Supreme Court rulings, that timeline is getting harder and harder to follow. And we've seen it across a number of cases across the country, including Manitoba, where cases have been stayed or collapsed because they could not meet the timeline that's required under the Criminal Code, under the laws to match what they need.

And that, Honourable Speaker, is frightening for victims that deserve to have their time in court, that deserve to have their cases gone through. I can't imagine a victim of a sexual assault having to hear from the Crown attorney or from the police services of jurisdiction that their case has been dropped or has been left behind because they couldn't meet the time requirements. And that's because this government isn't funding the Crown attorneys. The Crown attorneys could probably use a 50 to 100 per cent increase in their staffing to keep up with the workload. But even a small amount would've been helpful, but we saw zero in this budget. That goes with the court workers and all of the people that are involved in that justice system.

So, not only the Crown attorneys that need the support; let's move over to legal aid. Legal aid is provided to those that can't afford to have a hired lawyer at a higher rate. And right now we're seeing that capacity drop to near nil. There is less and less lawyers that are willing to take on legal aid cases because of the compensation, but also because of the workload that's provided to them, and yet not a dime of funding for this, not a dime for Legal Aid, and that's going to leave them struggling. They're already woefully below market rates, and the pressure of the sinking number of lawyers that are willing to take on cases will just exasperate the system, and it will continue to have issues that will result in not only

cases being lost but embarrassment to the government as a whole.

The next step—you know, we talk about the whole of government; let's talk about the whole of the justice system, and let's talk about corrections. Correctional facilities are severely overcrowded. We've heard that from the correctional officers. They've been calling for some help, but, again, although there is some money put towards corrections this year, there is nothing to help with the overcrowding. There's nothing to help with those that are jammed into these cells day after day, that causes more risk for the individuals that are guarding them because people get frustrated, people get upset in the jails and then having this overcrowding just causes more issues for them.

Jails are literally bursting at the seams right now, and there's concern about upcoming bail reform. If bail reform is going to happen at the federal level, because God knows nothing was done by this NDP government on the local level, although they said they could fix it on their own in 100 days and it's been nearly two and a half years, not a thing has been done on bail reform here in the province. But if the federal government comes through with increasing or augmenting the bail reform system, we can expect that more individuals will come into custody.

And with that is the growing concern of the number of cases that will go through the court system, the Crown attorneys will need to do more work again, the legal aid system will need to do more work and the jails will ultimately have to house these individuals, and that is going to exasperate the problem and increase it for the whole of the justice system. No money was forwarded by this NDP government to look after that.

People are scared, Honourable Speaker, people are scared in Manitoba, people are fearful for their safety. You would have think that that would have been an area that this government concentrated on, but instead they refuse to even acknowledge it, and they just move forward like it's same as yesterday. But, unfortunately, everything is changing, policing is getting more complicated, jails are getting fuller, the court system is getting backlogged, but this NDP government doesn't seem to care and doesn't seem to want to do anything about that.

It's funny, though, this government will provide funding for security rebates and home protection supports and business safety grants, but let's call that what it really is, and that is a transfer of responsibility from government to the citizens. So, basically, they're saying: I'm going to wash my hands of any of the responsibility for public safety and I'm going to put it on you, the citizens of Manitoba.

It's expected for you to take care of yourselves and it's expected for you to maintain the safety of your businesses and your homes. And on the same token, when we bring up a law or a resolution that would help support individuals in their homes and when their property and their own health is being attacked, it's voted down. It's nothing to do with the government. They're concerned that, you know, they don't want to be part of that.

So continuing on that public safety amendment, we have to say that this really isn't public safety. This truly is government acknowledging their own failures within the system of the justice world. It's also important to note that there's absolutely no plan for repeat offenders, none whatsoever. And it's common, it's common knowledge in policing and in law enforcement and in justice that a very small percentage of individuals cause the most crime and the most havoc.

And there's nothing in there to specifically target, no integrated strategies that connect. They talk about an all-of-government approach. There's nothing here that connects justice with corrections, with mental health, with housing and addictions. Instead, it's arrest, release, reoffend and repeat. And I'll say that again: It's arrest, release, reoffend and repeat. And that's on a complete spin cycle from this government.

And they've done nothing to address it, Honourable Speaker. It's just a complete revolving door. And it's shameful that this NDP government has refused to address that, even though they said—

The Speaker: Order, please.

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

The hour being 12:30, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until Tuesday, April 7, 2026 at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, March 27, 2026

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Committee Reports		Economic Growth for Manitoba	
		Cook	1013
		Moses	1013
Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs		North End Sewage Treatment Plant	
Fourth Report		Narth	1014
Corbett	1003	Kinew	1014
Tabling of Reports		Manitoba Hydro Outage Protocols	
Kinew	1006	King	1015
Asagwara	1006	Moses	1015
Ministerial Statements		Lengthy Manitoba Hydro Outages	
Indigenous Languages Day		King	1016
Kinew	1007	Moses	1016
Khan	1007	Support for RAAM Services	
Members' Statements		Bereza	1016
PC Private Members' Resolution No. 5		Smith	1016
Khan	1007	Personal-Care Homes	
World Autism Awareness Day		Pankratz	1017
Dela Cruz	1008	Asagwara	1017
Whoop & Hollar Folk Festival		Emergency Expenditures Budget	
Bereza	1008	Nesbitt	1018
Les Rendez-Vous de la Francophonie		Bushie	1018
Loiselle	1009	Emergency Expenditures Budget	
Greg Wiens		Guenter	1019
Cook	1009	Bushie	1019
		Naylor	1019
Oral Questions			
Cost of Living for Manitobans			
Khan	1010		
Kinew	1010		
Basic Personal Tax Rate–Exemption Increase			
Khan	1011		
Kinew	1011		
PST Exemption on Food Products			
Khan	1012		
Kinew	1012		
Basic Personal Tax Rate–Exemption Increase			
Khan	1012		
Kinew	1013		
		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
		Government Resolution	
		Fontaine	1019
		Johnson	1020
		Budget Debate	
		(Third Day of Debate)	
		Devgan	1020
		Cook	1022
		Corbett	1026
		Guenter	1028
		Loiselle	1031
		Balcaen	1034

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