



Second 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	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike, Hon.	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	Ind.
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Spruce Woods	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 29, 2025

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Could you please canvass the House for leave to waive rule 91(8) and to not see the clock today until all stages of Bill 47, The Fair Trade in Canada (Internal Trade Mutual Recognition) Act and Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act (Buy Manitoba, Buy Canadian Day), have been completed, including second reading, Committee of the Whole and concurrence and third reading, and also to allow the member—a member from the PC caucus to second all stages of Bill 47.

The Speaker: Is there leave to waive rule 91(8) and not see the clock today until all stages of Bill 47 have been completed, including second reading, Committee of the Whole, concurrence and third reading, and to allow a member from the opposition to second the motion?

Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: I hear a no.

Leave has been denied.

MLA Fontaine: Honourable Speaker, could please canvass the House to see if there is leave to not see the clock until the following bills have been—have had question put on concurrence and third reading motion: bills 7, 33, 41, 34, 38, 29, 10, 25 and 26.

The Speaker: Is there leave to not see the clock until the following bills have had questions put on the concurrence and three-third reading motion: bills 7, 33, 41, 34, 38, 29, 10, 25 and 26?

Is there leave?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

House Business

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Honourable Speaker, could you please

canvass the House to see if there's leave to 'expediate' consideration of a number of bills as follows:

(1) At the beginning of orders of the day, government business today, on the following bills will be called for second reading or resuming debate on second reading, with no debate; and that the question put immediately after the motion is moved, as applicable: bills 209, 210, 218, 300, 221, 222, 223 and 47.

(2) Once the question on those bill-motions have been resolved, bills 208, 209, 210, 218, 234, 300, 221, 222, 226, 233 and 47 will be referred to a standing committee tonight, Thursday, May 29, at 6 p.m. or one hour after the House rises. Once reported back to the House, these bills will not be eligible for report stage consideration, but will be eligible for concurrence and third reading during orders of the day, government business, on Monday, June 2, despite not being listed on the Order Paper.

(3) At the beginning of orders of the day, government business, on Monday, June 2, the following bills will be called for concurrence and third reading with no debate, and the question put immediately after the motion is moved: bills 208, 209, 210, 218, 234, 300, 221, 222, 233 and 226.

(4) Once the questions on those bill-motions have been resolved, the House will then consider concurrence and third reading of all specified bills as well as Bill 47, with the bills to be considered in an order decided by the Opposition House Leader. 'Devate'—debate provisions in rule 216–2(16) shall apply.

In the event of a discrepancy between the provisions of this leave request and the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the provisions of this leave request are to apply. The provisions of this leave request can only be amended by unanimous consent of the House.

The Speaker: Is there leave for the House to expedite consideration of bills as described by the Official Opposition House Leader? Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: I hear a no.

Leave has been denied.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 229—The Human Rights Code Amendment Act (Non-Disclosure Agreements)

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I move, seconded by the member from Tyndall Park, that Bill 229, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act (Non-Disclosure Agreements), now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wasyliv: Today, I'm proud to introduce Bill 229, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act (Non-Disclosure Agreements), a bill that would ban the use of NDAs to silence victims of discrimination or harassment in Manitoba.

In too many cases, powerful executives have harassed or abused employees, and instead of facing consequences, companies paid victims for their silence. The abuser stays protected and the harm continues.

This bill stops that. It makes any agreement that prevents someone from speaking out legally unenforceable and makes it a violation of The Human Rights Code to try to enforce one. It will force companies to confront misconduct, hold abusers accountable and help shift the culture.

Safer workplaces begin with transparency and the right to speak the truth.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

* * *

The Speaker: Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Honourable Speaker, I want to table The Path to Reconciliation Act Annual Progress Report. You got a couple here to review, and I'd note for your consideration we also have the executive summary translated into Anishinaabemowin, Cree, Dakota, Dene, Anisininew, Michif.

And pleased to table that for your consideration.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Vehicle Impoundment Registry Annual Report for '24-25 for Manitoba Justice.

The Speaker: Other reports tabled?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Wildfire Update

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures): As we all know, a provincial state of emergency has been declared under The Emergency Measures Act due to rapidly spreading wildfires and extreme fire conditions. This measure allows us to trigger interjurisdictional supports to speed up the process to provide safe—to provide space for evacuees and to respond faster to emerging needs as they arise.

We also want to ensure we respond to this emergency in a way that keeps Manitobans safe.

Evacuation orders have been issued for the city of Flin Flon, the communities of Pimicikamak Cree Nation, Pukatawagan Cree Nation and the northern affairs community of Cross Lake. This adds on to the orders previously declared in areas such as Lynn Lake and Sherridon.

We thank the federal government and Prime Minister Carney for answering the call for federal assistance from Manitoba. So far, assistance is being provided with air evacuation support for Pimicikamak Cree Nation and Mathias Colomb Cree Nation.

Today, we are looking at 17,000 people that are being evacuated from their communities. This is the largest evacuation Manitoba will have seen in most people's living memory. I want to thank all host communities, organizations and local leadership lending a hand to welcome evacuees.

Norway House will be welcoming folks from Pimicikamak Cree Nation, Jenpeg Generating Station and Whiskey Jack Landing. Nelson House and Opaskwayak Cree Nation have set up congregate shelters. Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson, Portage la Prairie, Dauphin and many others are all stepping up to lend a helping hand.

We acknowledge and truly appreciate seeing communities come together to help our neighbours.

We continue to receive wildfire assistance from across Canada, out of New Brunswick, Alberta, BC, Saskatchewan and from Parks Canada. We truly appreciate the collaboration and co-operation who are sending people and equipment to support our efforts.

I also want to take a moment to praise the wide array of public servants who are working around the clock to save lives, including the wildfire firefighters literally putting their own safety on the line. We also

want to praise the people who work in the Department of Families, staff who worked all night setting up congregate shelters in Winnipeg and Portage la Prairie; the emergency management staff running on almost no sleep as they co-ordinate the logistics of evacuations across the province; the clerks to—the clerks working to support fire crews in Thompson and our other initial attack bases; the workers registering evacuees at all hours; administrative staff who are the unsung heroes of every office, who stay late to support us all.

* (13:40)

We also want to praise the health-care workers who will always continue to look after us. And as ever, during such an all-encompassing emergency situation. The level of commitment out of our provincial workers is unparalleled and their dedication to supporting their fellow Manitobans is remarkable.

We see you, we are grateful for your services you provide each and every day.

As one Manitoba, let's continue to look out for each other and let's get through this together.

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for updating the House, as well as the minister for the briefing last night.

The gravity of the wildfires cannot be understated. Manitoba is seeing its largest evacuation in decades. My heart goes out to each and every one of the 17,000 Manitobans who are now having to flee their communities, their homes. I know it can be hard to stay calm in the midst of all of this, especially what you're going through, but please, be calm. Listen to local authorities. Know that all hands are on deck to ensure your safety, to get these fires under control.

Please follow the guidance of officials and keep yourself updated through official channels. And when you can, please make sure your loved ones know you are safe.

Thank you to the emergency personnel and all of those who have mobilized to help fight these fires and care for the evacuees. The situation we are seeing is devastating for families, children, homes, communities, livelihoods and much more.

So once again, thank you to all of those who are putting their own safety on the line to help Manitobans.

Lastly, to all Manitobans: I know the news about your fellow Manitobans, what they're going through,

can be very stressful and hard to hear. Know that everyone in this Chamber and this province and country is ready to help. Hundreds of people are working together to ensure that we get through this together. In the meantime, please make sure safety is your top priority. Be safe, be mindful, be kind to your neighbours and strangers alike and be safe.

Thank you.

Pride Month

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity): I am honoured to rise today to recognize the start of Pride month in Manitoba.

Pride is a time to celebrate, uplift, recognize and support our 2SLGBTQIA+ relatives. Pride month is recognized each year during June, but rallies, parades and festivals take place across our province throughout the summer, allowing all Manitobans to celebrate the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Pride is a celebration but it's also a protest. Pride is a demonstration against hate, discrimination and violence.

No one knows the intersection of joy and protest better than the drag performers at the heart of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. The Stonewall riots of 1969, the birth of the modern Pride movement, were led by some of the most marginalized: activists by day and drag performers by night.

Manitoba has a thriving drag scene with many drag performers carrying on this legacy of activism. It is my absolute honour to be joined in the gallery today by some of Manitoba's most beloved drag artists whose decades of work in our province have deeply shaped the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

From meaningful advocacy, to front-line care for our most vulnerable relatives, to building safer spaces for the next generation, what you do—both in and outside of drag—impacts on the 2SLGBTQI Manitobans, community and beyond. Your very existence is living proof to so many of our citizens that they deserve to be accepted, supported, celebrated and loved exactly the way they are.

I lift you all up for all of that fabulous work.

Drag is powerful, and that's why so many closed-minded people are afraid of it, many of whom sit in this very Chamber as elected officials. I remind those PC members—and they know who they are—

they have 2SLGBTQIA+ citizens in their very own constituencies who they were also elected to represent.

Pride is a celebration of the impact of community and chosen family to shape a better future. It's a protest against hate and discrimination trying to force some to the margins and in silence. It is proof people can exist and thrive in spaces where they've been told they don't belong, like this very building. And it's a testament to living authentically, unapologetically and joyfully on your own terms. That authentic, unapologetic joy changes everyone who witnesses and embraces it.

Miigwech for everything that you do, actively building a better future for the next generation. Miigwech for joining us in full drag on a Thursday afternoon during Pride week.

I wish you and everyone in Manitoba a safe and happy Pride season. Remember to tip your drag performers.

And I invite my Chamber mates to join me in celebrating our fabulous guests in the gallery today, and I ask for the names of my guests to be included in Hansard.

Anita Stallion – Malvin St. Goddard; Assuma Gender – Jude Yallowega; Cake – Aaron Mann; Cheron Sharelike – Will Garrioch; Dirt from the Ground-Cotton – Taliesin Dorais-Fleming; Feather Wolfe; Hari Vijay – Remu Shonek; Kymera; Local Honey – Davey Francis Cole; Ruby Chopstix – Alex Nguyen; Satina Belladonna Loren – Kerry Bertencello-Dale; Vida Lamour – David Kirton.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): As we conclude Pride week and step into what will soon be known in law as Pride month, I'm very honoured to stand today in the House to celebrate Pride month here in Manitoba.

Not only does this month allow for an opportunity to recognize the history and contributions of the 2SLGBTQ+ community in Manitoba, it offers us a chance to reflect on the values of equality and dignity for all people.

And some people may not realize the great role that Winnipeg has played in embracing diversity and advancing inclusion in our country and in the world.

It was in 1974 that two Manitoba men became the first gay couple in Canada to get married in a church. Fast forward to 1990, when the English-language term two-spirit was coined in Winnipeg to encapsulate a concept recognized among Indigenous cultures for ages. Not too long after, Winnipeg elected the first openly gay mayor of a large North American city.

Today, Manitoba is home to Canada's oldest 2SLGBTQ+ film festival. And just down the road we have the Place of Pride, Canada's first 2SLGBTQ campus. In fact, it was the previous PC government that helped invest over \$3.2 million to build the Place of Pride. And it was also the former PC government that helped co-ordinate a whole-of-government approach to 2SLGBTQ+ issues by establishing the women and gender equity secretariat.

There are a number of great events happening across the city and across the province over the next month. This weekend, there's the Pride run, the Pride festival at The Forks and, of course, the parade and rally here at the Legislature. It's going to be quite a party; I know that, having attended a few Pride events myself.

And I want to thank all of the community leaders and organizations that have worked over the years to ensure that issues affecting the 2SLGBTQ+ community are acknowledged and heard and that action is taken to promote equality for all. And I want to thank the entire community, from the trailblazers of yesterday to the people who continue their legacy today.

And to our guests in the gallery who shared their art and their words in the Rotunda earlier today: thank you for coming to the Legislature.

All Manitobans deserve freedom, dignity and respect.

Happy Pride month.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I ask for leave to respond to the minister's statement.

The Speaker: Does the honourable member for Tyndall Park have leave? [*Agreed*]

MLA Lamoureux: Today, I am honoured to rise to celebrate Pride month. So I would like to take this opportunity to say happy Pride to all Manitobans.

Honourable Speaker, Pride month is a time to raise awareness of issues that still need to be addressed in our world, and it is a time to celebrate, just like we did about an hour ago in the Rotunda and we will throughout the entire month of June.

* (13:50)

This year's theme is: Rise in Pride, Stand in Strength, a true call to action to rise together in unity and strength.

The 2SLGBTQ+ community here in Manitoba has long advocated for and fought for the rights that we have here today. With the outright hatred and

misinformation being spread, it's important to remember that in order to continue to help humanity thrive, we need to build stronger awareness. We all have to learn what it means to be accepting, understanding and inclusive of all 2SLGBTQ+ people and how acceptance means a better, happier and safer province and world.

I was happy to hear members on all sides of the House speak so positively and share stories in support of Pride month recognition earlier this week. I believe we need to encourage this dialogue and intentionally choose to learn about the needs and rights of 2SLGBTQ+ people. This includes reminding ourselves that, even here in Canada, there are still people and groups who continue to feel unsafe.

In closing, Honourable Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward today's ministerial statement, the member for Lagimodière (Mr. Blashko) for his legislation earlier this morning, having it pass unanimously here in the House, and thank those who have joined us in the gallery.

Happy Pride.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to moving on, there are some guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce to the members.

I draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Ruby Chopstix, Kymera, Anita Stallion, Feather Wolfe, Local Honey, Dirt from the Ground-Cotton, Hari Vijay, Cheron Sharelike, Vida Lamour, Assuma Gender, Satina Belladonna Loren, Cake, who are guests of the honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine).

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

I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today a girls folk dance team, Maples Mutiyaaran, and their teachers from Maples Collegiate, who won North-America-wide championship held in Brampton on May 17, 2025.

We have with us Jasreen Kaur Bajwa, Ishreet Kaur Boparai, Sumeet Kaur Gill, Khushleen Kaur Gill, Gurleen Kaur Mound, Manreet Kaur, Harkirat Dhillon, Gagan Saini, Neetika Sharma, Anshreet Kaur Gill, Amrit Sidhu, Jasleen Sidhu, Gurpreet Kaur; and their teachers/coaches, Paramjit Kaur, Jagdeep Toor, Tarajaneetjeet [*phonetic*] Toor, Ikjot Uppal; vice-principal Kamal Dhillon. And they are guests of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Brar).

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

We also have seated in the public gallery, from the University of Manitoba's English Language Centre, eight students under the direction of Morgan Klatchensky [*phonetic*], who are guests of the honourable member for Fort Richmond (MLA Chen).

And we welcome you here today.

Also seated in the public gallery we have with us today Lieutenant Colonel David Cronk, Dr. Mariola Wojtowicz, Major Melissa Marshall, Chief Warrant Officer Eric LeClair, Mrs. Andrea Bourgeault, Sergeant Richard Zoghareeb [*phonetic*], Sergeant Emerson Abanico, Master Corporal Alexandre Gosselin, Corporal Caleb Zwicker, Corporal Keegan Bean, Corporal Robert Manchurick, Corporal Dylan Sheppard, Mrs. Lori Truscott, who are guests of the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen).

And we welcome you all here this afternoon.

* * *

The Speaker: And while I have everyone's attention, another sad announcement. Isaac Lavitt: it's his last day as a legislative page.

Isaac will be graduating from St. Paul's High School this June, completing four years of intellectual and personal growth. He will begin his studies at Carleton University this fall, where he plans to pursue his passion for biology and writing. From there, he hopes to enter the workforce with a career in either biostatistics or bioethics.

During his time here at the Manitoba Legislature, Isaac has learned innumerable lessons about the function of government, the importance of collaboration and the realization that political diversity is necessary for an effective democracy. Isaac would like to express his gratitude for everyone who mentored, taught and guided him throughout this year. His experiences in this building were truly unforgettable, and he looks forward to carrying the lessons to Ottawa, where he will continue his paging at the House of Commons this September.

Isaac is the second in his family to have served as a page here in Manitoba and he is grateful for the opportunity to have learned, observed and grown in this Chamber. As he moves forward, he is hopeful that he will make meaningful impacts to society shaped in this—he hopes that he will make meaningful impacts to the society shaped in this Assembly. He hopes that he'll see you all again.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

St. Vital Provincial Sport Champions

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Well, Honourable Speaker, I am so happy to continue the tradition of celebrating provincial champions from St. Vital. Our local high school athletes have proven that they're a force to be reckoned with right across Manitoba.

Let's start with the Dakota Collegiate junior varsity girls basketball team, who absolutely soared to victory with a 72-45 win in the championship game defeating the Kelvin Clippers.

Shoutout to Katie [*phonetic*]-Kate Coghill, named an all-star for her performance as a guard/forward, and Madison Rach, who earned league MVP honours—both showcasing exceptional talent.

Over on the field, Glenlawn Collegiate's varsity boys soccer team left it out on the field with a solid 3-0 shutout in their championship game against the Steinbach Sabres. With five all-star players—Jack Money, Asher Pearen, Inioluwa Owulabi, Eliot Swernachek [*phonetic*], Nico Nadeau—they didn't just win, they dominated.

The Dakota Collegiate varsity and JV teams—unstoppable. The varsity team shut out opponents five times in the regular season. Led by defensive player of the year Destiny Okeldara [*phonetic*], league MVP quarterback Roban [*phonetic*] Vergatta and offensive player of the year Amid Kance.

The junior varsity football squad are actually two-time provincial champions after they defeated the Oak Park Raiders. These teams brought power, precision and pride to every game. That's the heart of champions.

These teams exemplify what it means to be champions on and off the field. Their hard work, grit and perseverance have made St. Vital proud, and they serve as role models for students across Manitoba.

To the players, coaches, families, school communities behind these victories: Congratulations, and thank you for making St. Vital proud.

Please join me in applauding and congratulating these St. Vital champions.

Lieutenant Colonel David Cronk

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): It's my privilege to stand today to honour a remarkable leader, a dedicated soldier and an inspiring member of our

community, Lieutenant Colonel David Cronk. Alongside his spouse, Dr. Mariola Wojtowicz, and colleagues, he joins us in the gallery here today.

* (14:00)

Since taking command of CFB Shilo in June of 2023, he has strengthened the bond between the military and Westman region. His leadership journey is rooted deeply in history. As a fourth-generation military member, he upholds the legacy of his great-grandfather and grandfather who bravely served in two World Wars. Their spirit of service lives through his unwavering commitment to Canada's Armed Forces.

His distinguished military service spans commanding tank troops with LdSH(RC), serving as a tank squadron battle captain, second in command, and completing four operational deployments in Afghanistan, Kuwait and Poland.

His service reflects resilience, courage and dedication to global security and co-operation. As base commander, he has championed trust, empowerment and open dialogue, fostering a culture where individuals feel valued and capable. His leadership extends beyond duty. He understands the importance of work-life balance, ensuring support for his team, while setting an example of humanity and compassion.

Beyond his professional achievements, he embraces life's simple pleasures. An avid traveller, cyclist, trekking and outdoor enthusiast, he reminds us that even the busiest leaders find time for their passions, especially the Vancouver Canucks and Toronto Blue Jays.

Of course, none of this is accomplished alone. His supportive spouse and family have been instrumental in his journey, ensuring his dedication to service is matched by a fulfilling personal life.

Today, we thank him for his monumental contributions to CFB Shilo in the Brandon area. His leadership, dedication and genuine connection to the community will leave a lasting legacy. As he embarks on his next chapter, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for his service and wish him continued success.

Please join me in honouring Lieutenant Colonel David Cronk for his incredible leadership and unwavering dedication to our country.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

The Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order.

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to echo the sentiments from my colleague from Brandon West and recognize Lieutenant Colonel David Cronk and all of those from CFB Shilo who will be assisting during the emergency state that we currently have.

I understand they have to leave right away to help Manitobans affected by the fires. So I just wanted to get a few words on the records and say thank you and recognize them for their most valuable work. All Manitobans thank you for your service, your dedication and your duty to Manitoba and Canada.

Thank you.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Yes, on the same point of order. I want to take this opportunity on behalf of the Province of Manitoba to thank Mr. Cronk for his life of service and to wish him and his wife all the best in the next phase of their journey.

To everybody who's joining us here today in uniform, I also want to say thank you for your service. It has been very inspiring over the past 24 hours to be engaged in the conversation with the Canadian Armed Forces as we've co-ordinated the logistics around moving several thousand Manitobans to safety. I know that these operations will be carried out over the coming days. And so, during our time of need with thank the CAF members here in Manitoba and across the country for stepping up, the same way we do every single day of the year.

Thank you for your service. Thank you—what you do for Canada. Thank you for what you do for Manitoba.

The Speaker: While I certainly 'appreesh' the sentiments from both leaders, it is not a point of order.

Recruit Ready

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): Honourable Speaker, every young person reaches a point in life where they start thinking about who they are, who they want to become. And for many kids, especially those without a clear path laid out in front of them, that's not always an easy question to answer.

But in Manitoba, more and more young people are finding that answer on fields, in gyms, during early morning practices and on long drives with supportive family and friends thanks to a program that is truly changing lives. Recruit Ready is a not-for-profit football

training program and mentorship movement. But what it really builds, day after day, rep after rep, is identity; a sense of purpose and a quiet confidence that your story matters.

It was started by Blair Atkinson and Brad Black, who is also a proud Waverley constituent. Brad, Blair and a team of dedicated mentors and coaches built this program by giving their time, their money, their hearts to the project because they knew what sport can do, how a football field can become a place where a kid from anywhere, from any walk of life, can become something more.

Through Recruit Ready, young Manitobans from diverse backgrounds, whether Métis or Filipino or Jamaican, learn to set goals, push through hard days and grow into strong, conscientious leaders.

Many go on to excel on the field, like program graduates Nic Demski and Brady Oliveira, who now star with our hometown Bombers and have returned to mentor the next generation of athletes, or Trae Tomlinson, who I just met today, who's playing 'div' 1 football in the US, starring for Louisiana.

The list of successes goes on and on. But maybe the most powerful part of this story—to me, at least—is the number of graduates who, after successful years in football, go on to become teachers, lawyers, police officers, coaches and mentors; people who lead by example and give back to the communities that raised them. Recruit Ready doesn't just prepare kids for football; it prepares them for life.

Joining us in the gallery today are founders Brad Black and Blair Atkinson, coach and board member Adam Bighill, coach Kelly Butler, graduate Trae Tomlinson and current Recruit Ready athletes Tavin Parani, Donte Sims and Tay Kabaalu.

I ask the House to join me in warmly welcoming these athletes, coaches and mentors.

Tam Nguyen

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Many Winnipeggers know Tam Nguyen as a skilled tailor, but behind every stitch is a story of courage, resilience and generosity.

Born in Vietnam in 1950s, Tam, who joins us today, apprenticed as a tailor from a young age.

In 1980, he fled Vietnam by boat, enduring five harrowing days at sea. Like many Vietnam refugees, he risked everything for the hope of a better life in Canada. In prayer, Tam made a promise: if he

survived, he would devote his life to helping others. He has kept that promise.

Arriving alone in Winnipeg, he learned English by listening to the radio while working in a clothing factory. By 1986, he had opened Tam Custom Tailor, serving everyone from locals, like myself, to NHL stars and even Hollywood actors. Tam's shop is also known not only for fine craftsmanship, but for compassion, creating custom, adaptive clothing for individuals with unique needs.

His impact reaches far beyond his business. In 1995, he founded Canadians Helping Kids in Vietnam, building schools and funding education for hundreds of children. Here at home, he has raised money for countless local causes, extended hospitality and hot meals for those in need.

Tam is a proud father and grandfather, who—I submit their names in Hansard here today from his family. A humble man who lives in—with values. Earlier this year, he crafted the Jets jersey for the Dale Hawerchuk statue in the True North Square, a fitting honour.

He has received multiple national levels, most recently the King Charles III Coronation Medal.

Honourable Speaker, Tam always says, do something good for others. That's exactly what he does.

Thank you, Tam, and thank you for all the sleeves that you have lengthened for me over the years.

Linh Dao, Van Do, Han Le, Bao Nguyen, Daniel Nguyen, Diem Nguyen, Dieu Nguyen, Lily Nguyen, Lina Nguyen, Minh Nguyen.

Call for Ceasefire in Gaza

Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Before I begin, I would like to respectfully request leave for completing my member's statement, if it continues to go over two minutes, without interruption.

The Speaker: Is there leave for the minister to exceed the amount of time for her member's statement?
[Agreed]

But I would caution the member not to go too far over.

MLA Kennedy: Today I rise to bring attention to the humanitarian crisis that is threatening the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in Gaza.

A few weeks ago, I stood at an arrival gate in the Winnipeg airport while a Palestinian grandmother,

mother and her three little boys walked through the terminal and onto Manitoban soil. This family was forced to leave their home due to the war in Gaza. And here in our beautiful province of Manitoba, we welcome them with open arms and open hearts.

* (14:10)

The connection between us was instant. I look like them, and I speak their language. I saw their bravery, courage and the relief they felt, knowing they were finally safe.

In Arabic, the word for auntie is khalto. After I embraced and welcomed the mother, she introduced me to her five-year-old son as khalto. His smile said it all. And as he leapt into our—my—into my arms, our connection was cemented.

Honourable Speaker, I believe it is my duty and responsibility as the first Muslim woman elected to this Legislature, and as a mother, to call for a lasting and enduring ceasefire in Gaza. I applaud and agree with the federal government's recent statement and stance on the war in Gaza. The level of suffering is intolerable, especially seeing starving women and children. And I echo the federal government's call for adequate, accessible and ongoing humanitarian aid to be allowed into Gaza.

The children who have come to Manitoba are receiving the life-changing health care they need, and that is something we can all be proud of. I am proud of all the Manitobans who are coming together to raise their voice and bring attention to this humanitarian crisis. It is the responsibility of all of us here in positions of power to use our voices to stand up for those who are voiceless, to protect the innocent and do our part to alleviate suffering.

Speaking out today is an important step I am taking to do what is right and use my voice to bring attention to this matter of great importance.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to moving on, there are some more guests in the public gallery that I would like to acknowledge.

We have seated in the public gallery, from Sandy Lake Christian School, 16 students under the direction of Daniel Wiebe.

And we welcome you all here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Wildfires Currently Burning in Manitoba Update on Evacuation and Firefighting Efforts

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, we may sit on opposite sides of the House and have different views on how to govern, and things get tense in here at times, but what unites us all is that we are Manitobans. That always comes first. Our thoughts and prayers are with all Manitobans affected by the fires and the first responders that are aiding in that. We pray that everyone reaches safety and remind everyone to please listen to local authorities and do what you have to do to get to safety.

I have some specific questions for the Premier but I'd like to start off by asking the Premier if he can provide the Assembly and all Manitobans with an update on the evacuation and firefighting efforts under way.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Honourable Speaker, it's been a busy 24 hours, to say the least. Manitoba Wildfire Service, alongside the Office of the Fire Commissioner is working with firefighters from many provinces across the country, and we thank those jurisdictions for helping us during our time of need, as well as firefighters from Parks Canada. I want to say here in the House that one of the Parks Canada firefighters was injured by a falling tree, and it just underlines the severity of the situation.

Last night, at approximately 3 a.m., the first buses arrived here in the city from Flin Flon. Folks are being housed in an arena here in the city, as well as a soccer field that's being stood up as a congregate shelter. The Department of Families has waived the normal 72-hour period for emergency social services, so people who are accessing help right now will get help immediately, no matter where it is that you're turning to.

Manitobans do one thing above all others: We stand together during times of need and we help one another. We are one people, one province, one future. We'll get through this together.

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

Recommendations for Supporting Evacuees

Mr. Khan: Honourable Speaker, I want to thank the Premier for his answer at this time when we all come together. Safety is the No. 1 concern for everyone. A house can be rebuilt, a new car can be purchased, but

a life lost can never be brought back. Please, everyone, be safe.

I'll ask the Premier: There are many Manitobans, many Winnipeggers here sitting at home watching this, reading the newspaper, watching the news and wondering what can they do to help here in the city of Winnipeg.

Can the Premier please rise and let Manitobans, Winnipeggers, know what they can do here in Winnipeg to help the 17,000 Manitobans?

Mr. Kinew: Well, there's a mix of things that Manitobans can do to help. There's things to do, and then there's things to not do.

A huge number of the 17,000 people who've been forced out of their communities are being supported by the Canadian Red Cross. So if you have the financial means to be able to donate to the Red Cross at this time, we certainly encourage you to do so. This is helping thousands of people access shelter, food and water.

At the same time, when we're talking about things not to do, we're asking for there to be no fires in the province at this time. We're also asking you not to fly drones. The fire that was threatening—or that continues to threaten Flin Flon, rather—we weren't able to fly tankers overhead a few days ago because of drones. It's simply not worth it to try and get video footage given the threat that we're seeing here.

My thoughts go out to a lot of the leaders who've had to make some very tough decisions over the past 24 hours. I've spoken to many of them directly. We're there to help you. You are making the right decision by putting personal safety—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Khan: I'd like to thank the Premier again for that answer.

And, again, heeding the advice of the Premier, Mayor Scott Gillingham and many local leaders and community leaders: listen to your local authorities. Do not fly drones. Get to safety, and as the Premier said, donate to the Red Cross. Let's all step up together and help Manitobans and show how strong we are when we come together.

I'll ask the Premier: Here in Winnipeg, I've had many phone calls and emails. And can people drop off

food? Can they donate supplies somewhere here in Winnipeg?

Maybe the Premier can shed some light on that, how people in Winnipeg can directly help with their efforts here.

Mr. Kinew: At this stage of the response, the best way to help is by donating to the Canadian Red Cross. I recognize that there's a ton of goodwill and a ton of Manitobans who want to do what we do best, which is to help out. But in this, the early hours of the emergency response, sometimes when we drop off perishable items or we drop off clothing that needs to be sorted, it actually takes time away from those who are on the front lines doing some very critical tasks.

So while we recognize those good intentions, I would refer people to monetary donations to the Canadian Red Cross at this time. That may change in the future, but that's the advice right now.

The other good news that I have to share with the House is that thousands of Manitobans have actually found shelter with their friends and family. And so for you to open your doors to people that you know is an amazing act of generosity, and it is helping us with the overall province-wide response.

And so I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who is inviting their neighbours or friends and families in from this dangerous situation.

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

Wildfire Evacuees Financial Assistance Plan

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you to the Premier. See, we can work together in here, we can ask questions and we can get answers. So I thank the Premier for that.

It's actually a really good piece of advice he gave there. I know myself and many other colleagues on both sides of the Chamber here were looking forward—were going to drop off non-perishable food items and supplies, but heed that advice and donate to the Canadian Red Cross.

I'll ask the Premier: Is there—can he tell us, and Manitobans, what type of assistance the Province is providing Manitobans and whether they will be—and I understand this is only the second day of this. Has the Premier thought about financial assistance to help Manitobans in the form of a temporary relief

or more significant long-term assistance to help the 17,000 evacuees?

Thank you.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Yes, the short answer is yes. We are helping right away.

So just to add a bit of context to the comment that I made about emergency social services being provided immediately, what this is is cheques being distributed to people who need help with food and the other necessities that come along with being put into a situation of evacuation.

Now, the reality is that, typically, in an emergency situation, it's the municipality or the local authority who leads for the first 72 hours, and then we step in with ESS. But given the scale of the situation here, the Department of Families has decided to waive that 72-hour period, and we're going to help people immediately.

* (14:20)

As folks in Lac du Bonnet would know, we're now, for some parts of the province, entering not just that first round of support, but in some cases, second or third rounds of support to help people who continue to be out of their homes.

So the answer to the other part of the question is yes; we will be there for Manitobans in the early hours in the coming weeks and in the months to come. The firefight is the first stage of this effort, but we'll be there—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Evacuation Order for Northern Manitoba Canadian Armed Forces Called In

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): And that's very good news to hear because we're all aware a provincial emergency has been called and we were hearing reports of Canadian Armed Forces here in Manitoba that have stepped up and more that are coming to the province to assist Manitobans and help with—against these fires.

Can the Premier confirm that the Canadian Armed Forces are now on the ground in northern Manitoba? Can he—maybe he has an update on what progress has been done with using the assistance of the Canadian Armed Forces on the evacuation of the 17,000 Manitobans.

I look forward to an update from the Premier on that.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): We thank members of the Canadian Armed Forces for their service for this great country each and every day, and during this time of emergency we thank them doubly so.

Earlier today the first—or, the first few flights by Hercules aircraft did start to transport people from northern Manitoba. We are presented with certain logistical challenges serving these communities. We're talking about shorter runways and some very challenging conditions related to smoke and other wildfire scenarios that these aircraft typically wouldn't have to deal with.

So this has required a lot of logistical planning for us to stand up this operation. We're perhaps going to have to maintain this for a number of days, given the amount of people who need to be transported, but I can confirm that the Canadian Armed Forces have responded both to Pukatawagan and to the citizens of Pimicikamak, who have evacuated to the Norway House Cree Nation.

Thanks, also, to the many local communities and First Nations—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Number of Evacuation Centers

Mr. Khan: And I want to thank the Premier once again for his frankness today in answering the questions that I know Manitobans are really looking forward to the answers for.

I also want to thank the minister of infrastructure and transportation for the briefing yesterday when this emergency first came up.

I would ask the Premier if he can update the Assembly on the evacuation centres here in Winnipeg.

Does the Premier have an idea—and again I realize it's the early stages—does he have an idea of how many evacuation centres here in Winnipeg are currently open for this, and does he have a projection how many more there might be needed to help Manitobans in this crisis?

Mr. Kinew: Yes. There is one congregate shelter open here in the city right now which had more than enough cots to help the people who arrived overnight. There's a second facility here in the city that's being stood up as we speak, as well as one in Portage la Prairie, which was open last night to receive people as well.

I think it's very important that Manitobans recognize that there are also communities in the North who

are housing their neighbours. The city of Thompson has several hundred people, if not thousands, at this point. The Norway House Cree Nation is currently housing thousands of people from their neighbouring Pimicikamak community, and the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation is also offering congregate shelter.

So when we talk about this being one Manitoba, this is not a situation where there's First Nations and municipalities and Northern Affairs and Province and federal supports. There is one layer of response: when you need help you're going to get it for every single person in this province.

Driver Education Program Lack of Available Spots

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Honourable Speaker, 15 and a half is a really important age for a lot of kids. It's their first chance to enroll in Driver Z and learn a really important life skill and learn how to drive safely, which benefits not only them but everybody that they share the road with. But for far too many families there's no Driver Z spots available. This has been a problem for well over a year.

When is the minister going to take this problem seriously and fix it?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation): Well, members opposite will know that this is actually a problem that started under the previous government, and for years it was unaddressed and it only got worse. In fact, under the previous government, they cut 247 spaces in the Driver Z program.

Now we're starting to fix the damage and I know that the lines that we're seeing today are a physical representation of that damage that was done to the Driver Z program.

But rest assured, Honourable Speaker, we are working closely with MPI to ensure that not only is the funding there to support the educators, but also that we're developing more spots, not just here in the city of Winnipeg but across the province of Manitoba.

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

Need for Instructors

Mrs. Cook: When people are standing in line all night, only to not get a spot, it's a clear indicator that the minister's plan is not working, and it's having a substantial negative impact on families. In many cases, these kids not getting their licence on time means

they're not eligible for summer work, including some government-funded summer student jobs.

But most importantly, it means that 16-year-olds are getting their learner's permit without taking this important training. That's a serious safety concern. As a parent, I share this concern with parents across the province.

When will this minister hire more instructors into the Driver Z program and give kids a chance to learn this critical life skill?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, as I said, Honourable Speaker, we've hired more instructors. We've actually almost doubled the number of spots that are available to Manitobans.

We, of course, recruited and did that work with instructors by signing a new deal with them, ensuring that they had a 30 per cent pay increase, and we added eight more fleet vehicles to be deployed, again, across the province.

We're also piloting a condensed program that's targeting rural areas and ensuring that that additional support and the fast-tracking of good-quality education is being deployed outside of the city of Winnipeg.

Again, members opposite left a total mess with MPI in a number of areas, but Driver Z is one example that, you know, people are frustrated about, and I agree—

The Speaker: Time has expired.

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

Private Instructor Contracts

Mrs. Cook: The NDP have been in power for almost two years, and the problem is getting worse, not better. Far too many Manitoba kids are getting their learner's permit at 16 without having taken this critical safety training. Clearly, the minister's approach isn't working. It's time for a more common sense solution.

Will the minister contract with private driving instructors to increase capacity for Driver Z training in Manitoba?

Mr. Wiebe: Again, Honourable Speaker, there's a complete lack of accountability from the members opposite. They cut 247 spaces. We added 500 and—almost 300 spaces, up to 588 spots. This is repairing the damage left by members opposite.

Even the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk) said, I wish I had the opportunity to be the minister for MPI. He said, "I would have fixed the situation" End

quote. That was his take on the situation and the damage that was done at MPI.

We're taking the kind of approach that works with community, enables more instruction and makes sure our roads are safe. We're going to fix the damage left to us by the PC government.

Driver Education Program—Westman Region Wait Times and Lack of Training Spaces

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): It's 10 p.m. in Brandon, Manitoba, and do you know where your children are?

Well, if they're a teenager, they're probably waiting in a lengthy line to register for Driver Z. Overnight, they tried—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Balcaen: —to snag the elusive Driver Z positions that were available.

How many 'spaces' has this minister made available in Westman?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation): Not only did we see 247 spaces cut by the previous government, but that was just the beginning of the damage that they were doing at MPI over their seven and a half years.

Of course, we know that what we inherited was a corporation that was in the middle of a strike, that had a board that was dysfunctional. We had a revolving door of CEOs. We had a report that came from their own experts that said that the entire corporation was, quote, misaligned and filled with persistent errors.

Honourable Speaker, there's a lot to clean up and, of course, we're going to make sure that our kids are getting the instruction they need. We're going to fix the damage left to us by the PC government.

Mr. Balcaen: It's 3 a.m. in Brandon, Manitoba. Do you know where your children are? As much as I'd love everyone—[interjection]

* (14:30)

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

The government bench needs to come to order.

Mr. Balcaen: As much as I love everyone coming to experience Brandon West, parents and students should not be forced to camp out overnight and try and get a

learner's permit. This should be a rite of passage, an opportunity available to every student that wants to learn driver safety.

What is the current wait-list demand in Westman?

Mr. Wiebe: Again, Honourable Speaker, a 40 per cent increase in the capacity in the Driver Z program in Manitoba, and that includes outside of the city of Winnipeg. I've already talked about how 200 additional spots outside of the city have been added, and we're going to continue that work.

The mess that we were left by the members opposite with the—with MPI was absolutely unbelievable. In fact, we're still doing work to uncover and unpack exactly the impact that it's going to have for a very long time when it comes to the operation of MPI.

But when it comes to our students, we want to ensure that we're working with driver instructors. We're increasing the number of spaces for training, we're giving additional money and we're making sure that they have the vehicles—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Balcaen: It's 8 am in Brandon, Manitoba. Do you know where your children are? Probably clogged 75 deep in a lineup in Brandon West, waiting to register for Driver Z. Under this failed Minister of Justice we are having no spots available except for the first three in lineup.

Is it possible that this Minister of Justice could answer questions for Brandonites and all Manitobans? When will proper positioning be available for members that want to take Driver Z?

Mr. Wiebe: Member for Brandon West asks these questions in a completely unserious way, to the extent where the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) was literally laughing while those questions were being asked.

And you know, honestly, Honourable Speaker, this isn't a laughing matter. This is a serious situation that was left to us, and now young people and parents throughout our province are paying the price for the PC mismanagement at MPI.

Driver Z specifically was a program that was very well regarded. In fact, I think the demand that we're seeing shows that parents want to see more investment, more drivers' instructors and more investment in training. But under the PCs they weren't getting it.

So we're going to take it seriously. We're going to fix the mess that was left to us. But the member opposite should get more serious about important issues—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Driver Education Program—Rural Manitoba Wait Times and Lack of Training Spaces

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, we are taking this very serious over here. Under this minister, Manitobans were waking up well before the crack of dawn, driving to their insurance broker or a service centre and hoping and praying that another location doesn't open earlier and all the Driver Z slots get scooped up.

How, in 2025, has this minister rolled back the clock to pen and paper and standing in line like it's a Metallica concert?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation): Well, now the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) is even getting admonished by his own caucus, and they say, well, now it's a serious issue, whereas the member for Brandon West was not taking this seriously.

We're going to continue to work on this issue. We know that over the past year, we have added 4,000 spots when it comes to Driver Z over the course of the year, and what we're talking about here is a specific program for the summer that parents rely on.

Under the members opposite, they had no plan. They cut the wages and they cut the resources for driving instructors, especially in rural Manitoba. What we've added is we've added a 30 per cent pay increase, we've added additional fleet vehicles and more training spots.

Honourable Speaker, the members opposite need to take accountability for the way that they've handled this situation and the mess—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Lakeside, on a supplementary question.

Mr. King: I know from experience with four boys, now on my last one, it wasn't always this hard. But this minister has lost all control of the process.

Honourable Speaker, 65 per cent of the spaces were for Winnipeg, which meant already limited rural spaces became golden tickets. Driving schools aren't an option in rural communities. Manitobans are arranging transportation for kids that should be on

their way to baseball or hockey; most importantly, their independence.

How has this minister allowed this problem to grow under his watch?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, speaking of losing control over the process, Honourable Speaker, members opposite were in control of MPI when they went—they allowed workers to go out on a politically motivated strike, a strike that was perpetrated by the members opposite in some kind of a divisive wedge-politics tactic that, of course, backfired, among so many others that they perpetrated.

But we know that they were rebuked by the PUB who said there was a lack of management control. There was a leadership crisis. It's something that can be—can't be turned around in a relatively short order.

We are making the changes and we are turning it around. But members opposite don't have a leg to stand on when it comes to MPI because they made such a mess.

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

Mr. King: There we are again, veering away from the issue at hand.

There are 204 spaces for all of rural Manitobans. Minister, there were 7,000 grade 10 students in rural Manitoba last year. That means 97 per cent of students aren't getting the driver training they need to keep our roads safe. Licences are a requirement for many summer jobs for these students.

Why is the minister denying so many students a chance at their first job, chance for university and keep our new drivers safe on the road?

Mr. Wiebe: Honourable Speaker, we've added 4,000 spaces over the course of the last two years. It's starting to make a difference. What the member opposite is talking about is, of course, the additional spaces that we've added just this summer.

We're continuing to work on the issue. We're continuing to work with instructors. We're continuing to ensure that they have the resources they need to not only get themselves the tools to educate our young people, but they also have the pay, the 30 per cent increase. A new agreement has been signed. And that's all the work that was done under our government.

Under their government, we saw a cut to this program every single year. Members opposite need to be accountable. They need to stand up and say that it

was their government that left us in this mess and tell Manitobans the truth.

Craft Beer Industry Tax Competitiveness

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Other provinces are well ahead in making their jurisdictions more tax competitive in the wake of Donald Trump's tariffs. Ontario slashed its beer taxes in half and rolled out sweeping reforms to boost their craft brewer industry. As a result, Ontario's craft brewers are now more tax competitive than Manitobans.

What is the Premier (Mr. Kinew) doing to ensure our local craft brewers can grow here at home and compete with Ontario brands?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): First of all, again, very proud to say that our Premier was in Ontario recently to announce a new trade deal with the biggest economy in Canada, Ontario.

There's also something else this team and our Premier are trying to advance here in this province, and that's Bill 47, a bill that we know will help to unlock opportunities for businesses in Manitoba. And you know what, Honourable Speaker, there's only one group of individuals in this province who seem to stand against this bill, and that is the members opposite.

Will they get on side, will they support this bill so we can grow our economy, create more jobs and build a stronger Manitoba, yes or no?

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

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, this bill could've been passed two months ago. And it was the NDP that voted it down.

But yet, one day after the Premier signed the MOU with Ontario, Ontario slashed its beer taxes in half, calling it a game changer for boosting margins and unlocking new growth.

Manitoba's beer markets will soon be triple Ontario's, putting Manitoba at a huge brewer and consumer competitive disadvantage.

Why is this Premier touting the advantages of inter-provincial trade in alcohol but failing to create real market access for our brewers, right here in Manitoba?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, the members opposite can continue to stand in this House and pretend that they care about advancing our economy, or they can

actually do the right thing and support the passage of Bill 47. It's that simple.

You know, in addition to that important work that's being led by our Premier and our minister of jobs, we're moving things forward. Our recent budget: \$3.7-billion capital plan to get 18,000 Manitobans to work; buy-Canadian legislation to bring more opportunities home for Manitoba businesses; continuing that important work on reducing interprovincial trade barriers; and of course, continued investments in trade-supporting infrastructure like CentrePort, like AGG, like the Port of Churchill.

We are doing the work to make Manitoba the strongest economy in Canada.

* (14:40)

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

Mrs. Stone: Speaking of the fair trade brewer-deal, Manitoba brewers now have not only a tax disadvantage but also a market-access disadvantage, because their fair trade bill further exempts Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, defeating the entire purpose of free trade and giving Ontario no reason to provide additional shelf space to Manitoba brewers.

Manitoba is the province of barley and hops, so why isn't the Premier fighting for the reciprocal access of Manitoba brewing companies; and why is he pitching wine country solutions for a province that makes beer?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Actually, we make Crown Royal and a ton of other great drinks too.

But you saw right there that the PCs just want to privatize. And that's why we don't support their approach.

I do, however, want to share with the House and with you, Honourable Speaker, a press release on Bill 47 that the government is putting out today, just showing how this legislation is supported by the Premier's business and jobs committee subgroup who has been working on interprovincial trade. I just want to read the list of names who support this.

You've got Ryan Kuffner of ec dev Winnipeg; Bram Strain of the Business Council of Manitoba; Chuck Davidson of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce; Jill Verwey of the Keystone Ag Producers; Gerry Price, the CEO of Price Industries; Gustavo Zentner of INTERPOC; Loren Remillard,

Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce; Mike Pulak of the United Steelworkers.

So, again, with all these business minds lining up behind Bill 47, what actually is the PC caucus doing? They say they want to get out of the way? Great. We've got better things to do than listen to your pointless, unsubstantiated objections to this important legislation.

Pass it today so we can get on to other things.

Manitoba Wildfire Evacuations Communication with Affected Communities

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Manitobans are facing devastating forest fires that have forced evacuations—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Lamoureux: Can the Premier be very clear and share what steps this government has taken to ensure real-time communication with affected communities?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I have been speaking with the affected communities throughout the past two days. And I think one of the things that's been very, very clear is that leaders in these areas are making some very tough decisions.

When you talk about having to order the last fire-fighters—who were the last people standing, if you will—out of a community to protect their own lives and to protect their own safety, that's a tough call for any leader to make. And yet mayors and chiefs have been put into that position. So I want to acknowledge their courage.

When it comes to information, we've been sharing it; we've been passing things up—to the chain. I spoke to the Prime Minister myself yesterday afternoon, and that's when we were able to get the commitment of the Canadian Armed Forces resources.

All leaders are working together to support you, the people of Manitoba, and we will get through this together.

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

Increase in Number of Wildfires Long-Term Fire Management Strategy

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Every year, these wildfires are happening earlier and with more intensity.

Are there plans to invest in a long-term fire management strategy in partnership with Indigenous and northern communities, and does the Premier have any words of advice for those living near the fires but have not had to and hopefully will not have to evacuate?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Well, I actually raised this very issue with the King the other day, and we had a substantive discussion, and I was impressed by the fact that he had the perspicacity to make the connection between climate mitigation, wildfire suppression and investing in our provincial economy all at the same time. He closed that conversation, as I've shared publicly, by saying that Indigenous wisdom is one of those elements that unites those key things.

So, yes, as a government that works with all Manitobans rather than just what we've seen with the members opposite, we are going to ensure that we learn lessons from this experience which has hit every region of the province at the same time, and ensure that we're working together to keep you safe this year and for decades to come.

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

Manitoba Wildfire Evacuations Organizations Accepting Donations

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Manitobans are stepping up. People are offering their homes, food and supplies to evacuees from across the province.

I understand that the Premier has suggested sending donations to the Canadian Red Cross.

Can he also share with the House if other organizations like United Way, Harvest Manitoba, True North Aid—just to list a few examples—will also be options?

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures): I thank the member for the question, and I think when we have this conversation about being all hands on deck, it's truly what it is in Manitoba.

And so, there's a number of organizations that have stepped up and offered their services, and as we go forward, it's not a matter of us as government or Manitobans even having to ask. Members and citizens and corporates are coming forward and saying: How can we help? So we're engaging with that so the Red Cross—redcross.ca—is how I invite people to be able to engage at this very preliminary stage.

And as things roll out and go forward, I'm sure there's going to be different questions and different

services offered from a variety of different organizations across all of Manitoba, and we're looking to engage that as this rolls forward.

Fair Trade in Canada Act Timeline for Passing Bill 47

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): Honourable Speaker, our government recently put forward Bill 47, the fair trade in Canada act. We're committed to building up Manitoba and strengthening Canada. What is the opposition doing? They're siding with Donald Trump over Manitobans and Canadians.

Can the Premier please share with the House why Bill 47 is so critical and why it must pass today?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Great question from the member from McPhillips.

So in addition to the many business and ag luminaries who have shown their support for the government's approach, I also want to share with the House that I have a First Ministers' meeting on Monday, and I want to be able to tell them that we've passed our legislation here in Manitoba.

I don't know what I'm going to say to the PC leaders across the country that the Conservative caucus here is blocking that approach, but I will table for the House a letter from the Premier of Nova Scotia. He acknowledges Bill 47 here, and he says that once royal assent has been granted, that all goods manufactured, produced or approved for use in Manitoba will automatically be treated as if they were manufactured, produced or approved for use in Nova Scotia—no further fees or testing.

The actions of the few on the opposition benches are standing in the way of real business opportunities. The members opposite ought to stand in the House and explain why they are wasting not just our time but businesses' time so that I can tell a real PC politician what the heck is going on with the Manitoba PCs.

Provincial Nominee Program Timeline to Eliminate Backlog

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, the facts are clear and, unfortunately, history is repeating itself under this NDP government. It was the—Manitoba's PC government that eliminated the NDP provincial nominee wait-list after the NDP were content to make people sit five years on a wait-list to get into the program. Well, now, Manitobans have learned this minister is racing to reset the list.

When will the minister get rid of her backlog?

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I actually thank that member for this question, a very important question about the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program that's specifically about the current backlog.

In 2023, under the previous failed PC government, they gave letters of advice to apply to over 16,000 applicants, even though they were only able to process 7,000-plus applications. So those extra 9,000 folks are still here, and we're still working on making sure that we can process those applications.

In addition to them, we're continuing to still process other applications from the other future years—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Narth: Honourable Speaker, the minister isn't exactly on speaking terms with the truth. We had processed record applicants the year prior to the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

The member will withdraw those words. They are dangerously close to being unparliamentary. We know full well in this Chamber we cannot accuse people of not telling the truth, so the member will withdraw those comments.

Mr. Narth: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, I withdraw.

* (14:50)

Honourable Speaker, we had processed a record number of applicants prior to the NDP taking government, and we're on track to process even more.

So why did this minister trip so hard at the finish line?

MLA Marcelino: Honourable Speaker, this past summer, I met with the immigration lawyers' caucus of the Manitoba Bar Association. And when I explained to them what the previous PC government did by drawing over 16,000 applications in their dying days of office, they were completely shocked. These immigration lawyers were completely shocked because they understood how much of a shock this would be to our system.

And until this point, we are still working on making that backlog disappear, and our department is working very hard to do that, and our government has properly resourced this department so that we can

continue to make those gains. And we'll be doing so because the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program is the engine of our economy.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Mr. Narth: Honourable Speaker, the second day of trying to get an answer. The member from Tyndall Park, yesterday, tried to get answers from the minister, but instead—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Narth: —she got personal.

Well, I welcome the minister to try to find a way to blame this on my dad, but in fact, it was us who built the program and deleted the NDP wait-list.

Why is the minister trying so hard to bring that wait-list back?

MLA Marcelino: Honourable Speaker, I am so proud of the record of this NDP government on the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program. Not only are we making gains for this backlog, we also were able to process a record number for the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program last year of 9,540 nominations.

We were able to do this because of all the hiring that we did in order to increase the speed of this application processing, but most importantly, we're trying to save as many workers as possible whose work permits are expiring. We did that last year and we did this this year for the facilitation measure that we were able to negotiate with the federal government. And to do that, we're going to be able to save up to 6,700 workers—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Manitoba Public Insurance Elimination of Third-party Liability Options

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Under MPI's own assessment, their announcement to eliminate their seven- and 10-million-dollar third-party liability—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

The government bench, and particularly the Families Minister, will come to order.

Mr. Guenter: Under MPI's own assessment, their announcement to eliminate their seven- and 10-million-dollar third-party liability options will impact around

12 per cent of their clients. This decision was quietly rolled out only a month before it comes into effect.

What is this NDP minister doing to ensure that the burden of explaining this change doesn't fall on brokers?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to speak directly to this member and to the other members of the PC caucus to try and approach your leader about Bill 47.

Honourable Speaker, it was clear that their leader, in the recent leadership contest, never had their rural base onside. It's now increasingly clear because of Bill 47 that he has lost support from the business community. And it's clear today that with the Bill 47 opposition, he's also losing support from PC premiers across the country.

So if they want to sit here throughout the month of June, we're very happy to do so. We will pass Bill 47 within a few days, and then we can spend the rest of the month talking about Sio.

So will the member there approach their leader and have them do the right thing—pass Bill 47 today? Or should we start drafting government motion after government motion so we can get to the bottom of who knew what and when, and who's paying the fines?

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired. Grievances?

An Honourable Member: No, petitions.

The Speaker: Petitions, sorry.

PETITIONS

Location of Safe Injection Sites

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The Province of Manitoba has filed paperwork with the federal government proposing the establishment of a drug injection site for illegal drugs at 200 Disraeli Fwy. without sufficient public consultation.

(2) The decision to locate the facility at 200 Disraeli was made despite that the site was located in the immediate vicinity of a daycare centre, high school and multiple community gathering sites, including churches and cultural institutions. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Mrs. Hiebert: (3) Residents, business owners and community organizations have raised concerns that the location is incompatible with nearby institutions

serving thousands of youth and families, and believe it is—will erode public safety and confidence in the area.

(4) Existing community consultations specifically ignored concerns about public safety and were criticized by community members for being artificial and scripted.

(5) The provincial government has failed to introduce legislation and regulations to control where drug injection sites can be located.

(6) Other provinces are closing drug injection sites and adopting a recovery model, following the expertise of groups such as the Canadian Centre of Recovery Excellence.

(7) This decision to ignore the experts will leave people suspended in addiction and will not give Manitobans their lives or their loved ones back.

(8) The provincial government has failed to fund and operate any treatment and—or additional Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine clinics to break this cycle.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to cancel drug injection sites in Point Douglas community, including the proposed location at 200 Disraeli Fwy.

(2) To urge the provincial government to legislate that no further site will be proposed without community consultation or community support.

This petition has been signed by Luke Rempel, Chris Libby, Jim Maldick *[phonetic]* and many, many other Manitobans.

Provincial Road 227

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) As part of ongoing strategic infrastructure investments to the provincial highway network, it was announced in August 2022 that almost \$70 million would be spent on upgrades to provincial road 227.

(2) Over 72 kilometres of PR 227 were to be paved along with the repair or replacement of three bridges and multiple drainage works.

(3) Reeves, mayors, councillors and residents of the surrounding municipalities, cities, towns and villages

were ecstatic and overwhelmingly supportive of this plan.

(4) The planned PR 227 was to connect Highway 16 with Highway 6, thus creating an alternative route to Highway 1.

(5) PR 227 was to be part of Manitoba's trade and commerce grid initiative, an expanded grid of highways that can accommodate heavy commercial loading that will attract new industrial activity, reduce transportation costs and optimize supply chain efficiency, which will benefit all Manitobans.

(6) The 2023 multi-year infrastructure investment strategy is a five-year, \$4.1-billion investment in Manitoba roads, highways, bridges, airports and flood protection. The paving of PR 227 was part of this strategy.

(7) The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure has cut the PR 227 project, notwithstanding that the project appears in the multi-year infrastructural investment strategy and listed on the Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure website as an active project.

* (15:00)

(8) Additional keystone projects in the 2023 multi-year infrastructure investment strategy were the Winnipeg One Million Perimeter Freeway Initiative, the Lake St. Martin and Lake Manitoba outlet channels and the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway into the Ontario border. The actions of the NDP government now bring into question whether any of these projects will be completed as planned.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to immediately restore funding to the PR 227 paving project; and

(2) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure the commitment to Manitobans to carry out all of the projects as outlined in the 2023 multi-year investment strategy in their totality, to the same scope and in accordance with already stated timelines.

This petition is signed by Alan Hamilton, Lloyd File and Elmer Lomer [*phonetic*] and many, many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

* * *

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business.

The Speaker: The honourable Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Mr. Johnson: Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House to see if there's leave for the following:

(1) To immediately withdraw Bill 47, The Fair Trade in Canada (Internal Trade Mutual Recognition) Act and Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act (Buy Manitoba, Buy Canadian Day), from the Order Paper.

(2) To rescind the decision that the House made on May 15, 2025, on the motion for the second reading of Bill 227, The Free Trade and Mobility Within Canada Act.

(3) At the beginning of orders of the day, government business today, Bill 227 will be called for resuming debate on second reading with no debate, and the question to be put immediately.

(4) Once the question has been put on the motion and if it passes, Bill 227 will be immediately referred to the Committee of the Whole. During Committee of the Whole there shall be no debate; however, members will be able to bring forward amendments with the question to be put on each amendment once it has been moved by the member;

(5) Once the bill is reported back to the House, the bill shall be called for concurrence and third reading with the following debate provisions and the question put immediately after the debate has concluded. The bill sponsor can speak for up to five minutes. A member from another recognized party can speak for up to five minutes. Each independent member may speak for up to five minutes;

(6) the House is not to see the clock until all stages described in this request have been completed. The purpose of this leave is to break down trade barriers as introduced by the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone) and ensure amendments are possible on Bill 227.

The Speaker: Is there leave for the House to withdraw Bill 47 and expedite consideration of Bill 227 as described by the Official Opposition House Leader?

Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Grievances? Orders of the day, government House business.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Acting Government House Leader): Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House for leave to waive rule 91(8) and to not see the clock today until all stages of Bill 47, The Fair Trade in Canada (Internal Trade Mutual Recognition) Act and Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act (Buy Manitoba, Buy Canadian Day), have been completed, including second reading, Committee of the Whole, and concurrence and third reading?

The Speaker: Is there leave to waive rule 91(8) and not see the clock today until all stages of Bill 47 have been completed, including second reading, committee—and I would remind members that when the Speaker is standing, he shall be heard in silence. Never mind pointing fingers; I'm looking at both sides.

Is there leave to waive rule 91(8) and to not see the clock today until all stages of Bill 47 have been completed, including second reading, Committee of the Whole, and concurrence and third reading?

Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

House Business

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Honourable Speaker, can you please canvass the House to see if there's leave to 'expedite' consideration of a number of bills as follows:

(1) At the beginning of oral questions—sorry, I'll repeat; I'll start that over. At the beginning of orders of the day, government business today, the following bills will be called for second reading or resuming debate on second reading with no debate and the question put immediately after the motion is moved: bills 209, 210, 218, 300, 221, 222, 233 and 47.

(2) Once the question of those bills' motions have been resolved, Bill 208, 209, 210, 218, 234, 300, 221, 222, 226, 233 and 47 will be referred to a standing committee tonight, Thursday, May 29, at 6 p.m. or one hour after the House rises. Once reported back to the House, these bills will be—will not be eligible for

report stage consideration, but will be eligible for concurrence and third reading during orders of the day, government business on Monday, June 2, despite not being listed on the Order Paper.

(3) At the beginning of orders of the day, government business on Monday, June 2, the following bills will be called for concurrence and third reading with no debate and the question put immediately after the motion is moved: bills 208, 209, 210, 218, 234, 300, 221, 222, 233, 226.

(4) Once the question in those bills' motions have been resolved, the House will then consider concurrence and third reading of all specified bills, as well as Bill 47, with the bills to be considered in an order decided by the Opposition House Leader.

Debate provisions in rule 2(16) shall apply. In the event of a discrepancy between the provisions of this leave request and the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the provisions of this leave request are to apply.

(6) The provisions of this leave request can only be amended by unanimous consent of the House.

The Speaker: Is there leave for the House to expedite consideration of bills as described by the Official Opposition House Leader?

Is there leave?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

* * *

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Could you please call second reading of Bill 47, the fair trade in Canada, internal trade mutual recognition, and amendments to the commemoration of days, weeks and months act, buy Manitoba, buy Canadian day, followed by third reading of Bill 7, The Human Tissue Gift Amendment Act, Bill 33, Bill 41, Bill 34, Bill 38, Bill 29, Bill 10, Bill 25 and Bill 26.

The Speaker: So it has been announced that we will now resume debate on Bill 47, The Fair Trade in Canada (Internal Trade Mutual Recognition) Act and Amendments to the Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act, buy Manitoba; followed by debate and second reading of Bill 7, 33—sorry, followed by concurrence and third reading on Bill 7, 33, 41, 34, 38, 29, 10, 25 and 26.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS**Bill 47—The Fair Trade in Canada
(Internal Trade Mutual Recognition) Act and
Amendments to The Commemoration of Days,
Weeks and Months Act
(Buy Manitoba, Buy Canadian Day)**

The Speaker: So now we will resume debate on second reading of Bill 47, standing in the name of the honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot, who has 11 minutes remaining.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I would like to continue where I left off. Unfortunately, the day had ended and I didn't have the opportunity to finish my comments.

I would like to point out to the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and to his front bench, a debate in the Manitoba Legislature is important. I know this Premier and other premiers before him, once they become a premier, would like to see this process dispensed with and they would like bills like Bill 47 to just be rammed through.

But there is a legislative process and the Premier talks about Constitution and he talks about bills and democracy. It's just when it happens and when it's in front of him, he finds it an inconvenience.

It's important to debate bills. And I mentioned in my comments the other day about the New West Partnership, and the New West Partnership which both Premier Gary Doer and Premier Greg Selinger spoke very negatively about.

** (15:10)*

They made jokes about it. I remember sitting in the Legislature and hearing Gary Doer laugh and mock the New West Partnership. For those who are listening and don't know what that is, the New West partnership was and then did become a formal agreement between British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan; and Manitoba was supposed to be a part of that.

And it was to take down all kinds of barriers; not just trade barriers, but other rules and regulations that made it very difficult not just to trade but to move items back and forth. It also dealt with professional designations, so that you would have one designation, for instance, for nurses, teachers and the like. And both NDP premiers thought this was a terrible idea, opposed any kind of trade, and every member on the NDP bench, including this Premier, voted against the New West Partnership.

In 2016, with the election of the Brian Pallister government, we began the negotiation with the New West Partnership and that time British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan. And we came to the table with the least amount of holdbacks. And I'd like to point out to the Manitoba Legislature, we didn't put any kind of legislation in front of the Chamber. We didn't need legislation; we had the authority as the government. We had promised it in the election, so we had a double authority.

But we showed true leadership. We didn't need to have this show of last-minute putting legislation in front of the Chamber, and then shaming people into passing things that hadn't been debated properly. Premier released a letter today of pre-eminent individuals, and I know many of them very well. And yes, they support Bill 47, as all of us support free trade across the country.

But every one of those pre-eminent individuals also supports democracy, and if they were to be asked, do you believe that there is a place for Manitoba Legislatures for proper debate for bills to be scrutinized for them to be discussed, they would also agree with that.

It's just that the Premier didn't put that in his letter because, as we know, this has now become politics, just like opposing any kind of free trade in Canada was the benchmark of the Manitoba NDP. And you had to go to Saskatchewan, Alberta and Saskatchewan—and British Columbia—to find real New Democrats who would stand up for free trade across Canada because the Manitoba NDP were ideologically opposed to any kind of free trade in Canada and isolated Manitoba from other provinces.

We signed the New West Partnership with the least amount of holdbacks, and because of that Manitoba is so well positioned for trading with other provinces in this country. That's not by chance. That is because of leadership, leadership that came under our Progressive Conservative government.

So then we hear this Premier, whose very own Cabinet ministers pulled down statues, burned flags. Premier was even a—posed with the hammer and sickle, the communist flag—there's a photo of him out there. And all of a sudden now he's become the big champion, wrapping himself in the biggest flag ever that he could get, and he—basically they've done a 180.

And we welcome them. We welcome them to the good side, to standing up for Canada, standing up for the Canadian flag, standing up for the monarchy.

The member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) is now the biggest fan of the King. And we've—Premier (Mr. Kinew) today talked about somehow they—the King being interested in trading and Canada, and we appreciate all that.

But this NDP in Manitoba, which used to sit in the shadows, in the darkness, when it came to free trade is now finally coming to the right side. But I would point out to them that with this also still comes democracy and we still need time to debate.

This bill came at the last minute. It's the last thing this government put on the docket for legislation. Let that sink in. This was so unimportant, this was so not an issue, this was not on their radar screen, that they couldn't have done this four months ago, three months ago, two months ago; in fact, it's the last piece of legislation that they put forward.

And again, you have the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba, which has stood for free trade. Brian Pallister was way ahead of his time, because not just did we sign the New West Partnership, we began the negotiation with going with Ontario and going with the least amount of holdbacks and talking about having an open and free trade agreement with Ontario.

So to hear what we heard today in question period, again, is that shameful performance that we get from the Premier, unworthy of the office he holds, and he should stop that kind of nonsense.

The men and women who are signing these letters, and the men—I think it was predominantly men—who signed that letter that he tabled today are pre-eminent individuals who know how important it is to have proper trade across Canada and then across the world as well, because not everything we produce will necessarily be consumed by Canadians, but we need to find other markets.

But in the short term, how much better would it be that if we could trade fairly and equitably and openly with each other across this country? And I would suggest to the NDP that they allow some debate. We still have time; we have today and we have Monday. Allow debate of this legislation. And it's important; it's part of what we do as a democracy.

So, yes, we want trade. We were a party that opened up cross-Canada trade unlike ever been done. It was historical what we did as a political party. And so for the Premier to suggest otherwise is just typical, the way the Premier does his politics. And it's very unfortunate. And I would suggest to him that he should rise to the level of what his office expects of him.

We believe that there is a lot of opportunity going east and that there are a lot of trade barriers. I gave an example the other day about just the kind of red tape that's put on. We know that for nurses who come internationally, it's harder for them to get their designation certified here than it is in Alberta, so a lot of them go to Alberta, do the course—it's online—they do the exam, they get their accreditation accepted and then they transfer it to Manitoba, because that way—at least that way they can get it—accreditation here for Manitoba.

Those kind of barriers have to come down. And those are the kinds of things that our government was working on. And we would encourage the NDP: this is important, that we do these kinds of things, that we take down. And it's not just trade, but it's all kinds of things that are put in the way of progress, because it's trades and goods and services.

So we would like to see a good cross-Canada free trade system be put into place. It is the right thing to do. It would be not just good for Manitoba, it would be good for Canada. You know, we've heard this Premier when he's starting to do his leadership run for one of the federal political parties, and we hear him, build, build, Canada, Canada, build, build. And maybe he should focus also a little bit more on, let's build Manitoba, as well, within Canada. That's important.

But we believe in free trade across this country. We are a trading province. We would like to see trade extended not just to the United States but to other jurisdictions to even it out a little bit better so we're not doing 80 per cent with one jurisdiction.

We believe strongly in free trade, and we will always be there, always standing tall for free trade and for the businesses and the farm groups that are working hard and producing product to trade with.

Thank you.

*(15:20)

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): One of the things that I was thinking about before I rose today is that, if there was some benefit to Donald Trump and his overt aggression towards Canada, is that we seem to be as a nation complacent about who we are and our love of our own country, and he got us out of that complacency.

And for the first time in a long time, we came together as a nation, and things that we thought were hard or we couldn't do all of a sudden were doable. And those political divides between different political parties didn't seem so big.

And all of a sudden, there was political consensus in Canada about the path forward, and one of them was that we had to get our own House in order, that we had to be more co-operative amongst ourselves when it came to trading and that we need to build up business within Canada, not only through exports to the United States. And there was a real sense that we were coming together as a nation, and it was lovely to see. It was beautiful.

So that was one of those rare moments, and you would think that when everybody agrees and there's a consensus and we all are kind of rowing in the same direction, we could get things done. And Bill 47 is a slap in the face to all of that. And I'll get into it more, because I think it reduces what should have been a feel-good, co-operative, everybody-in-this-Chamber-voting-for-the-same-thing event, turned it into a petty, you know, cynical political stunt. And it was not in the interests of Manitoba; it was in the interests of furthering the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) career and looking like he's very important on Monday at a first meetings—first ministers' meeting in Ottawa.

And, you know, I wish him well. He's there to represent all of us. But this Chamber and the business of this Chamber isn't in the service of one man's ego, and it needs to be focused on the people of Manitoba, and I'll get more on that in a minute. But I want to get into a little bit of background about how we got here, because I think it's very telling and explains how Bill 47 came about.

So on November 26, the President-elect Donald Trump, he tweets out that he's going to place 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian imports on his first day of office on January 20. So he's been saying this for a year, at least, or more. It wasn't a surprise to anybody. And the reason he gave for imposing the tariff, he says, well, he had concerns that Canada basically is a fentanyl pipeline and that we're sending illegal aliens into the United States. And that was his reasoning.

So on November 26, the Premier, our Premier, reacts in the media to these events, and of course, you know, if we remember the press conference, we—Premier likes a good political visual, so he was standing behind a US flag. But in retrospect, it probably should have been a white flag, the white flag of surrender, because I think it would have made a lot more sense with what came next.

So the Premier stands up there and he basically says Donald Trump is right. We need to do what Donald Trump says. And I quote: Canada needs to do

the things being asked of it if he wants to avoid those scenarios.

So that was his initial response, was panic, fear and docile compliance. There was no elbows up; there was no standing up for Manitoba. It was like, if Donald Trump says this, we got to give Donald Trump what he wants.

That was concerning enough. And, of course, the facts are even more concerning, because the Premier didn't stand up for Manitoba, and he didn't put the facts on the record. Manitoba is not a pipeline for fentanyl 'traffing'—trafficking into the United States. In fact, all of Canada makes up one per cent of the cases the US is facing, and we're about three per cent of the Canadian population.

The entire illegal immigration into the US from Canada was about 24,000 people last year. When you compare Mexico, that was 1.5 million. It's not even a drop in the bucket. Likewise, fentanyl importation—the US seized from Canada, the entire country, 43 pounds. The US, it was thousands of tons. So Manitoba was not a pipeline, either for illegal immigration or for fentanyl trafficking. Did the Premier stand up for Manitoba? No.

No. His response could only be described as obsequious. And, you know, that's fine; we can leave it at that, but he didn't leave it at that. He used Manitoban money. This last budget, he spent \$5 million—borrowed it, because we didn't have it—borrowed \$5 million to apparently—our conservation officers, because they have nothing to do, are supposed to drive around the border looking for illegal aliens. There has not been one reported case of any conservation officer arresting, detaining any sort of illegal migrants in that border.

So what are we getting for that \$5 million that we borrowed, other than a press release?

So that's when the Premier's dangerous rhetoric actually becomes reckless; it actually hurts Manitoba. Because if he spoke the truth, that that was not an issue—and besides, border security is a federal responsibility, not a provincial one—Manitobans wouldn't be out that money.

So not only did he did not push back on Donald Trump, he pandered to him. And then he turned to the federal government and said, you have to solve this.

So the Premier for the past 18 months knew Donald Trump was coming, knew what he was all about, and all of a sudden didn't have a plan in place about

safeguarding Manitoba, our economy and a trade strategy. We do not have a trade strategy in Manitoba. We still do not. It's not even been announced, doesn't even seem that that's a priority for the Province. Given that, you know, 50 per cent of our economy is trade, it baffles that we don't have a trade strategy.

So there's no attempt to diversify our markets and make us less reliant on US or China. Other provinces, smaller provinces, Saskatchewan actually puts us to shame. They have international trade offices in various key places in the world and they've had for years. And there's certainly nothing stopping Manitoba from doing that.

So getting back to Bill 47, what happens? You know, Manitobans, Canadians were reacting to this. But we actually saw leadership from the premier of Nova Scotia and credit where credit is due. He was the first one that came out and he's like: You know what? We need to be better at this in our own country. He comes out with model legislation that basically, if you take down your barriers, we take down ours and it automatically triggers it and it's fair, right?

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Because nobody wants to go first, because there sometimes is a cost when you take down some of these barriers. So that was actually a brave piece of legislation that showed some leadership. And so then we have the Manitoba PC Party who picked up on it and say hey, you know that's a good idea, we like it. And that was—but it was probably over two months ago they picked up on that idea and brought it to the Legislature, and they showed leadership. They had done what their constituents asked them to do, is come here and be legislators and show leadership and they did that.

And they said, hey, this is a good idea, we should do this for Manitoba. And the problem that we have here is that the government doesn't seem to be against it, because their legislation is almost identical to it, so they obviously agree with it, so why wouldn't they have let it pass?

You know, we had a vote in this House where the Liberals and my—me being an independent and the PC caucus voted for it, the only people who voted against it were the NDP. And everybody knew then what was about to happen. Everybody knew that cynical politics would kick in, that a week later—and sure enough a week later—a bill almost identical gets tabled, well past the designated bill date.

So if this government was serious about it, they would have introduced this bill in March and it would be law come Monday. But they were not serious about it; it was not even on their radar until couple weeks ago, quite frankly.

* (15:30)

So—and in fairness again to Brian Pallister, this was one of his obsessions. This was really—like, in the three and a half years that I was in this House with him, this was his issue. And nobody was talking about it back then, and he was that lonely voice saying that we needed to do this.

And it kind of set Manitoba up well for this moment, and it's accidental; I mean, these things just happen. But I don't know how many in this Chamber have read the northwest—new west, sorry—New West Partnership Trade Agreement and Canada trade agreement. I have. And in both of those documents, at the back is a section where a province can opt out. And depending on the province, there's whole pages and pages of opting out.

So apparently, you sign a free trade agreement, but then you have 10 pages of exemptions. And everybody has exemptions in Canada, every jurisdiction, except Manitoba. I think Manitoba had, like, almost zero exceptions, and I think, when it comes to it, we're No. 1 or No. 2 in Canada for jurisdictions that don't have exceptions.

So we are well placed as a province to benefit from this because we don't have many barriers that other people are struggling with. So now, it's just getting other people to play fairly with us and to drop their barriers, because right now our businesses, quite frankly, have one hand tied behind their back in many cases, and they're not getting dealt with fairly in other jurisdictions. So we actually stand to benefit most, I think, in Canada from something like this.

So we've always been a free-trading province and it's not always been to our benefit. So if the Manitoba NDP government had voted for it, then that PC bill would become law on Tuesday; I can pretty much guarantee it. And we wouldn't be having this debate and then—now, what we have is a government who is again, for one man's benefit, so that he has something to say at a press conference on Monday, is now trying to bully this Legislature, trying to hold this Legislature hostage and say, we're not going to finish on Tuesday and we'll be here all of June—and throwing down the gauntlet and, well, I'll show you.

Again, keeping in mind we're supposed to be a country about unity, and this is all supposed to be about getting together and working together for the benefit of the country; you don't have to threaten people to do that. You don't have to bully people to do that. You don't have to hold the Legislature hostage to do that.

And if you do, what does that say about your politics? What does that say about your political position? And what moral authority does your legislation have that you have to bully it through the Manitoba Legislature when you know everybody in the Legislature supports it? Everybody in this Legislature supports this piece of legislation. It's not what's in it; it's how it's being done.

And there's a principle here. So the government, you know, said—and Brian Pallister used to say this too, and it's so lacking in self-awareness: well, we have a majority so we can do what you want. Well, no you can't.

There are rules in this Legislature, and if you get your bill in before the designated bill date, well, then, you're going to be able to get that bill passed. But if you don't get your bill in on time, then now you have to work with the other parties in the House because those are the rules that everybody agreed to.

Those are the rules that we all agreed to, and you have to follow those rules. So now that Bill 47 wasn't introduced before the designated bill date, this government doesn't have the power to bully and push this through and now has to work with others and compromise and, you know, show Manitobans that we, as a Chamber, can function in a way that isn't dysfunctional.

But, apparently, that's too much to ask for this Premier (Mr. Kinew). And I think it would be a powerful statement to this Premier that instead of trying to bully people, instead of trying to hold the Legislature hostage, that he actually has a mature, grown-up conversation with the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Khan). They sit down and say, okay, let's get this done and what will it take to get it done.

Because I suspect if he held out the hand of friendship and he came with respect and he accepted the fact that the official opposition has a role here and they have to do their job, things would get done. Things would get done very quickly, and that would be important for this Legislature.

So what was really challenging and troubling to see is that when the PC vote did come to a vote, they voted against it. They claimed to have supported this

bill, but for cheap partisan reasons, they voted against it. Again, what message does it send to Manitoba?

The Premier today, you know, listed off some business heavyweights in Manitoba and go, well, they support this. Well, they also supported the PC bill too. And they would've wanted the government to vote for that bill on that day and certainly weren't supportive of them voting against it, especially knowing that it would be a law come Monday.

So it's a little disingenuous to say, you know, the business community wants it, but only our bill which is almost identical to your bill. So the politics of this—and I've heard this way too much since I've been in this building; it is probably one of the most toxic statements I've heard—is that we can't let them get the win.

And there's a culture here that, even if the other side agrees with you and everybody's in agreement, you can't let your opposition get a victory in the House because, oh my God, they're doing their job, and what would Manitobans think? And that type of toxic hyper-partisanship is poisoning this Chamber.

Manitobans expect more from us; they expect us to do better. This would've been one of those situations where there was no shame in the government giving the opposition a win, because it isn't the opposition winning; it's Manitobans winning. But when the government engages in this petty, cynical, you know, stunts and gamesmanship, we all lose. And it's enough for Manitobans to not trust politicians—well, it's because of things like this.

And how is the government going to explain this to their constituents, that there was a bill that they liked, that it came to a vote, but they voted against it because the Premier had a press conference on Monday and he wanted something to say? I mean, that's what happened. What would be the reaction to your constituents from that? They would be embarrassed. They would be embarrassed.

And there's a pattern here that you're seeing not just with Bill 47. Let's talk about the buy Manitoba ad campaign. It's gone now. I wonder if anyone remembers it; it was only a couple weeks.

This was an ad campaign to convince Manitobans to buy Manitoban, right? Good enough. Problem was, huge chunk of the money went to Meta and Facebook, Instagram, which is a US giant Internet company; it didn't even stay in Manitoba. No Manitoba ad company was even hired for this thing. And this disappeared as quickly as it showed up.

But they got a press release out of it, which is just the same as Bill 47. And then, of course, the Province was going to buy Canadian, and you remember that one. Because we're really mad at Donald Trump and his oligarch friends, and so we say to, you know, Elon Musk, we're not going to have our EV rebates for your vehicles.

But guess what, Elon Musk? We got no problem with Starlink, and we're going to still contract with Starlink, and Manitoba won't do anything about cancelling its Starlink contract. But, you know, EV rebates, that's a different thing. We have rival Canadian companies that can do what Starlink did. This government didn't even look to find an alternative source.

* (15:40)

So to 'quote' a former prime minister: Make that make sense.

So the Kinew government also claims that we're going to bar US companies from our procurement contracts, but we heard recently in this House that actually wasn't the case, and there was large multi-million dollar, sole-sourced contracts to US software companies from Manitoba. They didn't even look for a Canadian company to hire them. Again, make that make sense.

And then we come to the Premier (Mr. Kinew) lauding his memorandum of understanding from Ontario. So, you know, Premier Doug Ford, close personal friend and political ally of this Premier, and it was interesting because the Premier, in Estimates, talked about his relationship with Doug Ford, and I quote him.

This is what he said in Estimates on May 21, 2025: Every time I see Doug Ford, he's always, like, Premier, you're actually a PC. I'm going to convince you of it. But after today, like, no. So it tells you the nature of the relationship. It tells you the Premier is thinking of becoming a member of the PC Party and was contemplating it until very recently.

So others can see what we see in the Manitoba Legislature, that despite his brotherly love with the Premier of Ontario, he didn't get anything from this MOU. So the one issue that was agreed to was beer. Apparently now, our craft brewers can send direct mail into Ontario. They couldn't do that before.

Problem with that is—and the craft brewers will tell you this—that doesn't help them. Nobody sends a

12-pack of beer through the mail. The weight of that alone would be cost-prohibitive.

What would have been free trade between Manitoba and Ontario and what our craft breweries are talking about is they can't get their product into an Ontario liquor commission and they're barred from getting them in, or the rules are so strenuous and tough they can't actually get them on the shelves in Ontario. That would be a game changer. That would make our small breweries become big breweries, and it would be a huge for Manitoba economy.

But the Premier couldn't get it done. The Premier, with his best friend in Ontario, couldn't get it done, and we're here sitting—sending 24-packs of beer in the mail.

So the Premier is lauding this memorandum of understanding. He brought nothing back. It was actually an embarrassing failure that he should be apologizing to small businesses in Manitoba.

So another barrier is our local distilleries and brewers get a special price to sell in Manitoba, but they don't in other provinces. So that makes our products prohibitively expensive in Saskatchewan, in Alberta, in Ontario. So where's the discussion with those provinces about matching the price that we pay? There isn't, because this isn't serious. This is all about a press release, just like Bill 47.

So, you know, it's interesting: while our Premier is in Toronto selling out Manitobans, other premiers are actually doing the heavy lifting here. In BC, Premier Eby is bringing in a bill that would allow any government contracts with American firms to be cancelled and to give them legal protection to do so. Does anybody believe that our Premier has the fortitude to bring in that kind of bill?

They're also taxing, in BC, US trucks that are coming up and using their highways. So there's certainly more governments can do if they actually have the courage of their convictions.

Now, again, what's ridiculous about this debate is that everybody supports this bill in some form or another, and something is certainly better than nothing. But there's a few categories that, when we talk about this type of internal trade, that are affected. Alcohol sales are one; we talked a bit about that. We probably stand to benefit the most from that because other provinces have no issues selling into Manitoba, but we can't seem to do the same.

The other big area is trucking regulations. Well, we're basically the headquarters of trucking in Canada. We have massive trucking companies here. And it would definitely benefit if other provinces had equal regulations to us so that our trucks can freely go across the country.

It does get a little bit complicated, though, because places like BC, their trucks have to go up steep mountains and they have different regulations because of that. So it's not—these things aren't fix-all. You have to go sector by sector, area by area.

And, of course, agricultural regulation is another big area. And we have to be careful here because this also could hurt us. And I'll give you the example of that—in Manitoba, we regulate the price of milk. We have supply management here. We have just the right amount of producers making just the right amount of milk. We're not over-producing here.

And what that does is it keeps the price of milk low, but it also means that our producers can keep the family farm going, that they can actually make a living. And so it benefits both Manitoba consumers and it benefits small producers.

If we get rid of those type of regulations, our small producers could be hurt by it. And the Province needs to be aware of that and have a plan, right. Because not everybody wins when you change these regulations.

So we need to do more for our small businesses, our small producers, and we can support them in this process. And, of course, I think some people mentioned professional licensing is a big thing. As a lawyer, I'm licensed to practise all across Canada except in the province of Quebec, because they have a Napoleonic civil code, and it's—you have to go to school to learn a different style of law.

But pharmacists, same thing. They have—they can practice straight across Canada. But many professions can't, especially many health-care professions, and we would benefit greatly from that.

And, of course, the last area is government procurement. And, you know, that cuts both ways. I was driving up to Thompson and I was going into town, and the road was getting repaired. All the work trucks had Alberta licence plates on them. And we had brought in an Alberta construction crew to fix a Manitoba road in one of the most economically depressed areas of the province. And, obviously, the thought is, well, why can't we have Manitoba workers building Manitoba roads?

And so that's the tension here and that's the discussion we need to have about how we can be free traders while protecting our small businesses and protecting our small producers at the same time. And that would be a more useful use of our time in this Chamber than, does the Premier (Mr. Kinew) get to have another political stunt on Monday.

Thank you.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): I want to thank my honourable friend from Fort Garry for his very interesting remarks on Bill 47, the fair trade bill in Canada act that we're talking about today and having some thoughtful discussion on.

Just a few things I just want to remind people of: on this side of the House we introduced Bill 227, which was the free trade bill; was brought to a vote, the NDP government voted the bill down. Two months later, we're now back on two days from when this session is supposed to end and we're talking about Bill 47, which basically has just had the name changed to fair trade.

And there's a few differences in the bill that I'd just like to highlight for the House again this afternoon. And again, many of my colleagues have put words on the record and I just apologize in advance if I'm repeating some of them, but I think many of them bear repeating.

And I guess one thing that troubles me is we haven't heard from very many members on the other side of the House. I can't recall the last member of government to speak on Bill 47. I think the honourable minister over there spoke, but I'm looking across here and many of them have things to say when we're speaking on this side, but when it comes to their turn to speak, no one rises from their seat.

So the main differences between our free trade bill that we proposed, 227, and Bill 47 is, from what we can see, the NDP government has changed the title to fair trade from free trade.

* (15:50)

Now, I guess they're the same; I'm not going to debate fair trade, free trade, but I guess they had to make some change to make this bill appear to be—look like a—I don't know, a better version than what we had. But I can see that the NDP have watered down this bill by not allowing any services to be provided that are currently provided by Crown corporations, which means MMLL, MPI and Manitoba Hydro are being protected in this bill from any form of competition.

And this is to the detriment of consumers here in Manitoba that could choose better, more competitive and more affordable products.

Bill 47 also exempts all regulated professions from the reciprocity rules, which seems to make the bill somewhat ineffective and will not bring about true labour mobility within Canada and will not accomplish true free trade for our labour force.

Bill 47 also has a huge loophole that the government can exempt entire industries, goods and services from the act through regulations without coming before this Legislative Assembly.

Bill 47 requires the Province to actively designate other jurisdictions as 'reciprocating' instead of making the recognition automatic under the law established by the act itself.

This bill has—it's tacked onto this bill a new buy Manitoban, buy Canadian day on June 1. Well, June 1 is coming fairly quickly—I think it's Sunday—so I would urge the government to get on board here and start working with us on this side of the House to make Bill 47 a reality.

I have an interesting document here from the Montreal Economic Institute that I would like to read some passages of it into the record here today. It's a public document that I just happened to receive overnight that I thought had a lot of information on trading here in Canada. It talks about bilateral breakthroughs in Canada, the promise of 'reciprocal' mutual recognition in interprovincial trade.

So I'm just going to start reading through it because I think it has some very interesting arguments about why free trade is so important in Canada and has been important for many, many years like the member from Fort Garry said. I was a part of the Pallister government that believed in free trade and, of course, as a Progressive Conservative, we'll always believe in free trade on this side of the House.

But Brian Pallister had a vision. He had a vision that we would join the New West Partnership. The New West Partnership started in 2010, but for six years, until this government was elected in 2016, Manitoba would not join the New West Partnership. In fact, many members who were on this side of the House at the time said the New West Partnership didn't even exist; it was a figment of our imagination.

Well, Brian Pallister changed that. Just after six months after being elected, we joined the New West Partnership along with British Columbia, Alberta and

Saskatchewan. So this side of the House definitely believes on free trade.

It's—and it's certainly good to see that that side of the House now is starting to come around and think free trade's a good idea. Obviously, it took Donald Trump to convince that, or perhaps the leader—once the leader made a few trips down to Ottawa, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) made a few trips down to Ottawa with his new-found friends down there, they convinced him that free trade was a good thing.

So Canada's vast geography and decentralized government structure create unique internal trade challenges. Provinces enjoy significant autonomy and regulatory authority over many economic activities, resulting in a patchwork of rules, regulations, resulting regulation standards and certification requirements that vary by region. I think we all know that. This adds cost, complexity and frustration to interprovincial commerce. A product or service that complies with one province's rules may require new testing, paperwork or even redesigns to meet another.

So legislatures and policy-makers have long sought solutions, from the 1995 Agreement on Internal Trade to the 2010 New West Partnership. I want to stress, again, Manitoba didn't join 'til 2016 under Progressive Conservative government. And then, of course, that was followed by the 2017 Canadian Free Trade Agreement.

Progress has been slow, though, across Canada, until this latest crisis came up. Harmonizing regulations across all provinces is complex and time-consuming.

So mutual recognition, in which approved goods or services are automatically accepted in each other's jurisdictions, offers a more practical and politically feasible alternative. It avoids full harmonization across Canada while still reducing barriers for consumers and businesses. Most importantly, provinces don't need to wait.

It is also different from unilateral liberalization, in which one province opens its market to goods and services approved elsewhere, but without 'reciprocal'—reciprocal—there we go—access to other provinces' markets, the benefits may be harder to communicate. Conversely, mutual agreements between two or more provinces allow governments to frame reforms as delivering values to both sides.

It also provides cover for reform-minded provinces. They can justify regulatory changes of part of a negotiated partnership, rather than as a relaxation of their

own standards. In practice, however, widescale, mutual recognition across multiple provinces remains difficult.

This is why bilateral, or small group agreements may be more viable. They can limit the number of regulatory differences that have to be navigated and give governments greater control. Provinces with more aligned interests, whether they be geographic, economic or political, can also move more quickly and some appear already to be doing that.

I think we only have to look to the Maritimes here. We had Nova Scotia—recently introduced a new approach that may change the game with respect to liberalization of internal trade. March 26—that was what? Two, three—two and half months ago, passed bill 36, the free trade and mobility act within Canada. That's about this side of the House brought in Bill 227. We were ahead of the game as well.

Bill 36 in Nova Scotia is brief, but it's wide in scope. For provinces that want to work with Nova Scotia, they'll accept, without additional testing or fees, any goods approved for use in the other province, even if they do not technically meet local standards.

And importantly, which Bill 47 doesn't do, this bill 36 in Nova Scotia covers services. Professionals licensed in provinces will, with few exceptions, receive automatic licensure in Nova Scotia in a matter of days. A matter of days, imagine that. Professionals travelling across Canada, coming to a province and being licensed so they can immediately go to work, whether they're veterinarians, nurses, doctors. It's certainly something that we need here in Manitoba.

And the momentum's spreading. The Premier's (Mr. Kinew) new friend, Doug Ford from Ontario: bill 2, the protecting—the Protect Ontario through Free Trade Within Canada Act. It takes a more cautious tone through an emphasis but also aligns with Nova Scotia's approach. New Brunswick has also joined through a memorandum of understanding and has signed an additional agreement with Newfoundland and Labrador. And little Prince Edward Island has introduced a bill of its own: the Interprovincial Trade and Mobility Act.

These provinces have all got ahead of Manitoba and we ask why, on this side of the House: Why is coming to the last minute that we're being bullied into pushing bull—Bill 47 through or being threatened with staying here all of June and doing other things?

So I think that—I think the members on the other side of the House perhaps were being told to talk to our leader. Perhaps they might want to talk to their

House leader and have the House leader negotiate with our side of the House on a solution to this.

So Nova Scotia's new mutual recognition legislation makes it a natural starting part—point for assessing the potential of subnational, internal trade reform. Based on detailed 2021 Stats Canada data, the MEI estimates that on average and adjusted for geography, Nova Scotia's internal trade costs add approximately 15 per cent to the cost of shipping goods and services across provincial borders. These cost increases are especially high for services at roughly 24 per cent compared with only 4 per cent for goods. This suggests that regulatory and licensing frictions, rather than transportation or logistical issues, are the dominant barriers and therefore, represent the key opportunity for reform.

* (16:00)

Trade costs also vary by provincial partner. Barriers are relatively low with Ontario and Alberta, around 11 per cent; somewhat lower with British Columbia, 8 per cent; but higher with Quebec, 18 per cent; and highest with Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia's Atlantic neighbours, where they reach nearly 20 per cent.

So the payoff from reducing these barriers depends not only on the size of the trade costs, but also on the total trade involved. Based on data from 2021, Nova Scotia's top trading partner is Ontario, with nearly \$11 billion in trade. Quebec follows at over \$5 billion, while New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island combined total about \$4.3 billion. Newfoundland and Labrador, British Columbia and Alberta each exceed \$1 billion, while Saskatchewan and Manitoba trade in the hundreds of millions with Nova Scotia.

What then would be the potential economic payoff from a Nova Scotia-Ontario mutual recognition agreement? Overall, MEI estimates that such an agreement could boost Canada's GDP by roughly \$4.1 billion, and that's little Nova Scotia trading with Ontario.

Nova Scotia, unsurprisingly, stands to benefit the most, with annual growth estimated at \$2,800 per person. Estimates for Ontario show gains of about \$100 a person.

It might be tempting to assume that only Ontario and Nova Scotia would benefit, but in fact the gains are far broader. National supply chains link economic activity across provinces that—meaning that even a two-province agreement can have positive spillovers elsewhere.

MEI estimates that Alberta would gain about \$15 a person and British Columbia about \$9. While seemingly modest, these gains reinforce the broader national value of mutual recognition. The benefits also show up in wages and prices. Eliminating trade barriers lowers input and consumer costs between provinces. For services where average trade costs are about 16 per cent, removal could significantly reduce cross-border prices.

Overall, the MEI model predicts wages in Nova Scotia will rise by 4.1 per cent, while the average cost of goods and services would fall by about 1.2 per cent. In Ontario, prices would drop slightly by about 0.1 per cent, reflecting the broader, albeit more muted benefits of reform.

So we move on to some gains from bilateral free trade zones in Canada. So MEI examined Nova Scotia's potential agreements with Ontario and then turned to other possible bilateral agreements. So this is where it gets interesting. The chart here shows the national gains from bilateral free trade zones in Canada in billions of dollars.

It's estimated here by the Montreal Economic Institute, these are the gains for Manitoba based on Manitoba being a free trade zone: Manitoba would gain \$2.8 billion in trade with BC; Manitoba would gain \$6.1 billion in trade with Alberta; \$6.1 billion again with Saskatchewan; Ontario, with the Doug Ford government, the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) friends right down there right now, \$5.2 billion. Manitoba would gain \$2.8 billion with Quebec; New Brunswick a modest \$800 million; Nova Scotia, \$700 million; and PEI, nothing to be sneezed at, \$200 million; and Newfoundland and Labrador, \$900 million with Newfoundland and Labrador. Those are gains from free trade here in Canada.

So there's no argument from this side of the House that free trade is so important to Manitoba. We don't understand why Bill 227 wasn't adopted by the government. We don't understand why Bill 47 had to be put up at the last minute.

But here we are today, at the last minute, talking about Bill 47. At least this side of the House is talking about Bill 47. I'm thinking there's members on that side of the House that may get up next. We still have about an hour left in the day here; I—my time is running short.

So the final conclusion from the Montreal Economic Institute, a well-respected economic think tank here in Canada, says: While the details of the respective

agreement still need to be finalized, provinces exploring mutual recognition with Nova Scotia are responding to what could be a pivotal shift in Canada's internal trade policy. Agreements that broadly recognize each other's regulations, credentials and standards can deliver significant economic benefits, both provincially and nationally. This matters for individuals who see results in the form of higher wages, lower prices and better living standards. And for smaller provinces, per capita gains could reach several thousand dollars annually per person. Nationally, the benefits run into the billions.

The largest barriers and hence the largest gains from removing them lie in services, where licensing and certification rules often restrict the ability to operate across provincial lines. Though usually framed as labour mobility issues, they are more fundamentally barriers to service trade. For mutual recognition to reach its full economic potential, agreements must go beyond enabling relocation; they must allow professionals to work across provinces without duplicate licensing exams or paperwork.

I think that's something that this Legislature in Manitoba certainly needs to work toward. I don't think Bill 47 addresses these issues, and I think there's still a lot more work to be done by this government.

So to close out, I just want to say these estimates are based on a well-established economic model grounded in real trade data, but they're not forecasts. Internal trade costs are not directly observed and the results reflect long-term adjustments, not overnight effects. Gains would accumulate gradually as capital and labour shift towards 'mert' productive issues.

Even so, the direction and scale of 'benets' are—benefits are clear. Nova Scotia, which had the foresight to pass a free trade bill two and a half months ago, and—joined by Ontario and Prince Edward Island, who all have also passed bills—are charting a more ambitious course. If fully 'implemated', these efforts could mark a turning point. At a time of slow productivity growth, internal liberalization—be one of the few tools available to drive—sustain improvements. Other provinces should take note: Canada's prosperity may well depend on it.

To that end, honourable Deputy Speaker, I just want to say that our PC team certainly supports free trade. We definitely support free trade. We have always supported free trade. We support Bill 47. We support the democratic process. We support our right to speak on free trade, here in the House.

And I'm going to cede my time now to another member to put more words on the record on why the PC Party supports free trade and Bill 47.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): It's a little breezy, so I hope I don't lose my papers here in this area.

But—fair trade in Canada, the—Bill 47, I want to shed a little bit of light on an issue that is shaping the—our economy and affecting livelihoods across Canada and right here in Manitoba, specifically. It's the on-going trade war and how it's affecting our country, our province; and how we need to make sure that we expand trading between provinces and make sure that we are able to bring our products and services to other provinces across our country.

I just wanted to mention a few things that I know are very important to my community specifically, when it comes to this.

We do have a lot of people who—businesses who are brewing beer and cider in my community and in my area, and it's very important that we make sure that we stand up for all of those organizations and those groups and those businesses. That's their livelihood and that's what they pour their life into. We need to make sure that we do make sure that we have shelf space for them across the country and not just in Manitoba.

* (16:10)

And we do support trade across Canada, free trade as well, and—that's what I mean—and it's important for us to continually make sure that we're putting our community and our businesses first before our own personal desires and aspirations when it comes to wanting to do things our way, rather than what we should be doing and what's right for Manitobans.

Globally, we witness rising tensions between major economies, like the United States and China. But now, even historically, closer to home, is the relationship between us and the US. It has become under strain—it has come under strain. We're in uncertain—charted territory. Disputes over dairy, soft lumber, aluminum and electric vehicles have led to new tariffs and retaliatory measures both—on both sides of the border.

These trade tensions, while often framed in policy disagreements in Ottawa and—over Washington, have very real consequences for people in industries here right at home. It's important for us to listen to those around us.

I've had several—quite a few opportunities to meet with different organizations and businesses and industry in my community, specifically my constituency of Morden-Winkler. A lot of them have—a lot of their trade partners are in the US, and they're really feeling a big strain on their company and their industry right now. And it's important for us to work together as a team.

Like has said—been said before, it shouldn't be about politics right now; it should be about doing what's best for our province and for those that are trying to make a living here.

Let's start with Canada. Overall, again, the US is our largest trading partner. With tariffs—when tariffs are imposed, Canadian industries, especially in agriculture, energy and manufacturing, feel the pressure. Export costs rise, profits fall, and businesses delay investment because of uncertainty, which causes us to not grow and our economy to not grow.

Consumers also suffer as higher prices get passed down to—down the supply chain. We're now seeing increased scrutiny on sectors like steel and dairy, with the US pushing for more access while Canada tries to protect its domestic industries.

Now let's bring the focus to Manitoba. Manitoba is a province that thrives on trade. Over 60 per cent of our exports go to the US, and when access to that market becomes difficult or stops because of US-imposed tariffs, it gets complicated—we-complicated. We see trigger-tighter regulations continue on both sides of the border. We feel the hit directly, especially in southern Manitoba in the agricultural area and the industry area.

We need to make sure that we continue to protect the economy of our province, and we'll need to continually encourage trading between provinces to make sure it benefits Manitoba, not just other provinces around us. That is why we need to do better at bringing down barriers in our own country. We need to encourage other provinces to welcome Manitoba products and services on their shelves.

Our agricultural producers, especially canola, pork and wheat farmers, are particularly vulnerable to trade disruptions. For example, when the US places duties on agricultural imports, or when disputes disrupt transportation networks, Manitoba farmers lose vital markets and face lower prices for their goods.

This is not something we need to be fighting about. We need to make sure that we work together as a team and pass this bill. We need to all work at passing the bill, and it should benefit everyone.

In the manufacturing sector, Manitoba companies that produce auto parts, machinery and construction materials are experiencing higher costs for raw materials, especially when those materials come from or are sold to the US. Some have even cut—had to cut their jobs or reduce production to stay afloat.

At its core, this trade war, whether it's China or the United States, it's just about policy—it isn't just about policy; it's about people; it's about rural communities wondering if their farm will survive another season, or manufacturers struggling to keep their workers employed.

So what should we be doing? We should be talking; we should be—we should have already been passing the member from Midland's bill when that came about. That was important legislation, and it should've just been done because we should be caring and putting Manitobans first.

What should we be doing first? We need a strong, proactive leadership at the federal and provincial levels to advocate for freer trade agreements and defend the interests of Manitobans so that we can have trade across—and cross provincial lines and making sure that all Manitobans and all provinces across the country are functioning properly with each other for a benefit of a—of our country of Canada.

The MLA from Midland brought forward a bill to do just that. Unfortunately, the NDP government didn't—not support this bill and instead took what she had done and reintroduced it as their own bill, Bill 47. We obviously support bringing down barriers and encouraging trade within our provinces across Canada. It's just disappointing that it has to be like—done this way. Our member from Midland was the first to bring legislation forward to do this in Manitoba.

We support our businesses, manufacturing industry in our country and in our province, and we want to do everything we can as an opposition caucus to help our province during this difficult time. I'll say that again: we, as an opposition caucus, want to do whatever we can to help our province.

Second, we must support our local industries in diversifying markets so we're not as dependent on one partner. And finally, we need to invest in innovation and infrastructure to help make exports more competitive globally and to make sure that we can do this as well across country of Canada, from province to province. We need to have regulations that work—that when they've travelled with products and services

from different provinces, that it just—it's smooth and it goes and it benefits everyone.

Manitoba may just be one part of Canada, but in a trade war, every province matters and every voice counts. So we need to work together with our trading partners across the country.

At the heart of this bill, Bill 47, this bill is about removing international trade barriers across provinces. Let's talk about that for a bit. It recognizes that when we allow free flow of goods and services within Canada, we create a more competitive and prosperous economy, not just for the country but right here at home.

The bill also introduces buy Manitoba, buy Canadian day, a powerful reminder that supporting local industries strengthens our communities and our economy. But here's the key point: while trade opens—openness is essential—it must be balanced by protection and diversification. Manitoba's—specifically—economy relies heavily on trade, but too often we are vulnerable, whether to international trade wars or supply chain disruptions or other regulations in other provinces.

We are a very open province. We have a really great policy already in place that has been put in place by a previous PC government. But right now we need to really concentrate and work on making sure that we are able to bring provincial, like Manitoba—the province of Manitoba—bring our goods and services forward across the country to benefit our communities, our businesses and our industries and our—both our—in our rural areas and our city. That's why this legislation is not just about freer trade; it's called—it's a call to build resilience. It should be called to be building resilience across our country.

Encouraging Manitobans to buy locally, we protect our farmers, manufacturers and entrepreneurs from global shocks. We help to alleviate a little bit of the pressure that happens when we have something like this happening. It helps us to become resilient and makes us more self-sufficient, rather than right now we need to—we're struggling to make sure that we have enough markets to sell our products to.

It also affects us deeply when we can't sell products to our neighbours, but we can still sell to our neighbours—like our neighbours in the US, but we can still sell to our provinces across the country of Canada.

* (16:20)

So as we discuss Bill 47, let's commit to 'bolder'—broader vision. When you—it helps to diversify our economy. It helps protect our key industries and it

helps to—our farmers to get products across the country to different ports and different areas where they can use to get their items to market. Ensuring that Manitoba not only trades freely but thrives is very important.

Something that touches all of us, however—and I want to talk about this for a minute—is when we talked about buy local, buy Canadian, buy Manitoba products. I want to talk about where we spend our money. I want to talk about the importance of supporting small businesses and shopping local here in Manitoba.

Whether you live in a small town like Neepawa or a bustling neighbourhood in Winnipeg, or southern Manitoba or out west or out north, the choice to shop local carries powerful economic and social impacts.

I want to talk about what I did this—what—I'm going to talk for a minute about an event that I attended today. It was a wonderful event. It was the Indigenous Chamber of Commerce launching success for the leaders of tomorrow. I attended that today, the luncheon. What an amazing organization. It was so great to sit there and listen to young Indigenous entrepreneurs who have done amazing things with their gifts and talents and the businesses that they've started.

And those are the businesses that we are talking about today, some of those businesses. They went through a program—I had an opportunity to talk to one of them, and one of them had gone through an amazing program called the Young Entrepreneurs Program, and actually, we had such a great conversation because my son went through the same program when he was 18 years old, and the success that this young man had had and what he's doing with his gifts and his talents and his new business that he's running, a tech company, and helping educate people in—Indigenous peoples across Manitoba.

And he's travelling actually to different provinces also, teaching them how to be safe online and teaching them about how to use Internet and all these different things that—for-like, that help them to stay safe, and going to schools and educating kids and—about it, about technology.

And it was such a great—and this is what he does, this is his business, and it's amazing. The story that he was telling me about what he does to help these—the communities, it was beautiful. And I really enjoyed it, and we had a—they had a panel discussion with three different Indigenous business owners there, two women and one man. And just the stories of them talking and sharing about what they do was amazing.

And, anyway, this Young Entrepreneurs Program gives young people the opportunity to bring their business ideas to life, providing them with tools, mentorship and confidence. It helps them to succeed. And these are the businesses that we're fighting for when we talk about opening trade corridors across the province and across the country. These are the businesses, these are the entrepreneurs who are going to be able to get their products out past the borders of Manitoba and onto shelves in Ontario or BC or wherever it is they want to take these businesses or their products to.

And it's part of what we do when we're talking about Bill 47, is that's exactly what it is. We're talking about people. We're talking about businesses right here who are working hard to make it, and this—anyway, this program is really great, and actually my son had also gone through the program and it was really good for him, and he was able to actually mentor as well, once he went through the program, he was able to mentor other young people coming through the program.

So just a really good shout-out to that program and to the Indigenous Chamber of Commerce for the wonderful lunch that they put on today. It was such a great educational process and just highlighting those young people that are the future—our future leaders of tomorrow, so that was really great.

So those are the things that we really need to cherish and protect when we talk about free trade, or fair trade. Those are the things that we should be looking at, that business, that small business starting out. Everyone—every industry and every business starts out somewhere, and I believe that they'll be huge, you know, they'll have success and they'll just continue to grow.

And that's where a lot of our industries are right now. We have a lot of industry right now, a lot of businesses, a lot of organizations, chambers of commerce that are working to support their members and want to make sure that we get this passed.

And we do support this bill; we just wish we would've been able to do this already in the last bill that was put forward by my colleague from Midland. So anyway, yes; so now we're—here we are; we're talking about what we can do to continually support our province and our businesses.

But what—again, I was talking about what we do, where we—how we spend our money is so important. And today, I want to talk about the importance of

'smorting'—supporting those small businesses and those—shopping local here in Manitoba. Wherever you live, it's so important and it carries powerful economic and social impacts like I talked about with these small businesses that are starting out.

Let's look at the obvious but often overlooked small fact that small businesses are the backbone of our economy. Everyone uses small businesses every day, whether it's a small diner down the street, a local eatery or a small flower shop or a car wash or, you know, a little garage that does oil changes. They're all so important. We use them every day.

In Manitoba, small- and medium-sized enterprises known as small, like small businesses, make up over 95 per cent of all businesses. That's pretty incredible. These aren't just numbers on a page. These are your neighbours, your friends and maybe even you who has a small business. These are your—they're the independent coffee shop owner who greets you by name, the local mechanic who fixes your car and does the oil changes, like we mentioned, and the artist at the weekend market whose work reflects our unique prairie culture.

We spend money at local businesses. More of that money stays in the community. It just helps our economy, continually. According to economic studies, for every \$100 spent at a local business, around \$68 stays in the local economy, compared to only \$43 when spent at a large chain. That difference adds up. It supports local jobs; it funds public services through taxes and it helps communities to thrive and helps our economies to grow.

Now let's take a look at how this plays out across Manitoba. In small towns, in rural communities, small businesses are not just a convenience; they're essential. In many places, they're the only option for groceries, hardware and home services. They often double as community hubs.

When we support these businesses, we keep our small communities vibrant and self-sufficient. Without them, people are forced to drive long distances and money flows out of the towns. Eventually, jobs and even families follow. It's important for us to have these small businesses healthy and vibrant so that we can grow our communities so that large businesses and industry can continually flourish and there's—they have a large base of population to draw from, as well, for their jobs.

In our large cities, like Winnipeg, local businesses bring diversity and innovation. They reflect the character

of our neighbourhoods and provide unique goods and services that big box stores just can't match, or don't even carry. They give our city its personality. From Osborne Village to The Forks, the Exchange District to St. Boniface and areas like St. Vital and Fort Rouge, they're all part of the things and businesses and stuff that we do in our province. These areas attract tourism, investment and community pride, and that matters.

Beyond the dollars and cents, supporting small business is about connection. When you shop local, you're not just buying a product, you're building a relationship, you're supporting someone's dream, such as we talked about earlier. But the presenters that we had today, at the Indigenous Chamber of Commerce event, it was amazing to listen to their dreams and how their business have taken off and flourished.

* (16:30)

Beyond the dollars and cents, supporting a small business is about connection. You're supporting someone's dream. Not only—local business owners are more likely to invest in their community and hire local staff and support local causes. They support our kids' sports teams, donate to community fundraisers and participate in local events. And I think all of us, as MLAs, know in this whole room that we have a—we attend many of our local communities' events and fundraisers and sports events. It's a wonderful part of our job.

It's also worth noting that small businesses stepped up during hard times. During the pandemic, local stores found creative ways to keep going, offering curbside pickup, online orders and home delivery, many of them bending over backwards to serve us even when they were struggling themselves. That is—that's the kind of resilience and commitment that deserves support. That's what we need to fight for when we fight for trade across our province and across—sorry, across different provinces across Canada.

It's important for us to be able to really provide what those small businesses and medium businesses need to get their products out to market and to people who want them across the country and on the shelves.

And something to consider: our consumer choices shape our future. Every dollar we spend is like a vote for the kind of community we want to live in. We do not want cookie-cutter cities dominated by big box chains or online giants. We want to be diverse, lively communities full of character and community. I think most of us would choose that any day.

But it's not always easy. Convenience and price often drive our choices. So it's important for us to make

sure we make mental—or, like—we make choices specifically that we can do that. We can, you know, buy that birthday gift from a local artisan. We can grab that next coffee from a coffee shop next door. That's really important. It's about the power and importance of supporting small businesses and choosing to shop local.

When was the last time you shopped at a local bakery, a family-run hardware store or a small boutique in your community? I actually know that there's a—down north Main, there's an amazing little hardware store that one of my friends lived close to, and she says she loves going there because—down, like, north Main, Winnipeg—and she said she loves going there because it feels like the small-town hardware store.

Even though she could run to a Lowe's or a different—or just a regular large store, she goes to this one because she really enjoys the small-town feeling about it or she knows the owners who have been there for many, many years. Those are all important things, and those are the ones—the businesses that we need to fight for when it comes to trade across Canada.

In Manitoba, small business account for so—such a large percentage of business across the province. It's our neighbours and friends and our families. And it's a continued resilience that we build when we bring that forward. It strengthens our communities, both large and small, whether you live in a big city or a small town. It also creates job and youth opportunities, which is something important we need to talk about as well. Supporting small businesses isn't just about buying local or homemade, but it's about our future. It's about the personal connection that we talked about as well.

Challenges that face—you know, we need to really make sure we—competitiveness—we need to make sure we talk about that because we need to stay competitive across other markets. And in order for businesses to stay competitive, they need to be able to go to other provinces and make sure that they can put their products on the shelves.

So here's some things we should be doing. We can ask people to shop local at a shop or a farmers' market on the weekends. We can choose a local restaurant instead of a large chain. Some—and a restaurant can be a chain, but if it's locally owned, that's what we need to really—that's important. Share your favourite small businesses on social media; that's always a really good way to do it. Encourage your friends and family to buy local gifts during the holidays.

These small steps can create big change in our province and for the family that lives down the street that owns that small business.

Manitoba's strength lies in its people, and our small businesses are at the heart of that. They embody the values of hard work, community spirit and resilience. They are places where we gather, celebrate and connect. But they cannot thrive without us. Each one of us here has an obligation to do the right thing for our province. We had the opportunity to vote for the free trade bill that the MLA for Midland brought forward, and the NDP decided not to vote for that bill.

Now we have Bill 47, which is basically the same bill, and we want to make sure that we support free trade in our province. We brought the bill forward first; of course we support it. We support businesses, we support free trade, we support opening barriers across our country. We need to let—continue to support the small, local shops and businesses. Let's make sure that our communities, whether big or small towns, continue to be the places where dreams grow, where we have young people who stay here because there's a thriving business sector, that they have support if they open up their small business and that they can continue to dream big and do what—the things that they want to do.

One of the programs, like I said, was this Young Entrepreneurs Program. It's such an important part, and we need to continue to foster all of those organizations and programs. We need to encourage our young people to continue to expand their businesses and take those chances. But the only way we can do that is to make sure we have a healthy, vibrant economy where they can grow, where they can succeed and they're not concerned or worried that they won't be able to make it. Investing in a small business or starting out is a really hard thing to do for anyone, and it's something that we want to make sure that we have the best environment we can for small businesses and for young people to start their businesses.

We also want to take care of our large industries as well and make sure that they have what they need to succeed. We need to make sure we advocate for them and do everything we can to continue—so they can continue to grow. We need to make sure that we look at all the different angles for them as well; when they're importing packaging, for example, for products and then they export it, they get taxed twice or duty—charged duty twice.

There's so many different things that we need to look at. But right now, we're talking about Bill 47 and

how it needs to—how we do support that, but we just need to make sure that the government knows that there's a lot of bills that are very important and we are willing to work with them to, and they just need to come to the table.

And I think if we all sit down, come up with some really good solutions, I think we can all be winners here today. And I just want to encourage that working together is important, and I think, on our side, we're working together, and we want to make sure that the government is also coming forward and working with us as well.

So, again, I want to encourage that we continue to work together and for the better of our province and all of the trade that we can do across country.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Dawson Trail.

Sorry, we can't hear you, member from Dawson Trail.

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Apologies. Can you hear me now?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, we can.

MLA Lagassé: My apologies. Sometimes I forget that the mic needs to be down, not up.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I'm proud to stand here today to speak in support of Bill 47, The Fair Trade in Canada (Internal Trade Mutual Recognition) Act and Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act, buy Manitoba, buy Canada day—buy Canadian day.

I'm proud to speak to this in spite of the First Minister constantly trying to silence us members elected in Manitoba. I will share my comments, and if the First Minister was really concerned about this, perhaps this bill would've been submitted on time to the House and the House leader would've had it ready for this particular debate.

* (16:40)

This bill is a step forward for our province, for our economy and for the hard-working people I represent in Dawson Trail and across Manitoba. This is about unlocking opportunities for local businesses, workers and communities to grow and succeed, not just here at home, but across our country. We need to break down the barriers holding Manitoba back. We can start this by putting partisan politics aside.

Let's be honest: these trade barriers between provinces just don't make sense anymore. We're all Canadians, so why is it so hard for a business in Ste. Anne to sell to someone in Saskatchewan? Why is it complicated for a qualified electrician from Nova Scotia to work here in Manitoba? And if your product is safe and approved in Alberta, why does it need to be tested here again? It's outdated, it's frustrating and it's costly. It costs people real money, time and opportunity.

This bill helps move us towards common sense. It sets up a mutual recognition framework so that if another province has similar standards and rules, we can say: you know what? We trust your process and we'll honour it here. That's fair; that's smart and that is long overdue.

This bill is built on co-operation, not on competition. Once again, it's unfortunate that the NDP have made this a partisan issue. It's—it isn't about giving away control. It's about building trust across the country. This legislation is based on a simple idea: when another province or territory has comparable standards, we'll recognize their goods and services. It keeps protections in place for things like regulated professions and Crown corporations, but it still opens the door to meaningful trade partnership.

This bill doesn't throw open the gates recklessly. It builds bridges together thoughtfully. Buy Manitoba, buy Canadian day is more than just symbolic.

Now, I want to talk for a minute about the buy Manitoba, buy Canadian day piece of this bill. Some folks had said, why bother with this special day; it's just symbolic. But let me tell you, symbols matter. We've got incredible businesses right here in Dawson Trail and across Manitoba. Farmers, fruit producers, marketers, makers, tradespeople, folks who take pride in what they do, and they deserve to be recognized and celebrated. Declaring June 1 as buy Manitoba, buy Canadian day is about reminding people where their money goes when they shop local. It's about supporting our neighbours and building stronger communities. And it's something I know my constituents will get behind because they already believe in it.

This bill builds on what other provinces are already doing. Some critics are acting like Manitoba is acting alone here, and that's just not true. We've seen Nova Scotia, British Columbia, New Brunswick and Ontario take similar steps. We've even signed a memorandum of understanding with Ontario to push this idea forward. This is not a partisan issue; it's a Canadian issue, and

Manitoba is joining the conversation and hopefully not trailing behind.

In fact, with Bill 47, we're positioning ourselves as a province that leads with purpose and integrity, a province that collaborates instead of competes. Our previous PC team saw the value in this as my other colleagues, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler) have already mentioned in their speeches. The foresight of our previous team had this—had on this—was exactly the kind of approach we need in today's uncertain global economy where we're facing US and Chinese tariffs, rising costs and supply chain issues. Let's stop making it harder on ourselves within our own country.

With that said, it's unfortunate, once again, that the NDP did not pass this when they had the opportunity to do so when the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone) brought this forward. And then, in their realization that they made a mistake, tried to bring—own their—bring their own copycat bill at the eleventh hour and expect it to pass.

Let's talk for a minute about labour mobility. There's definitely more to do, but this is a start. Conversations have come up about labour mobility, and this bill doesn't go far enough to allow professionals to move more easily between provinces. And to do that, I say there's more work to do, but this is just one small step. You can't overhaul decades of red tape in one bill.

When we talk about red tape, it reminds me of the last time the NDP held office and how red tape was the theme and the mantra of their day. Hopefully, they have learned from the past and they are not destined to repeat it. They now have an opportunity to set a new tone. They can create a framework that is flexible, that opens doors and leads to more co-operation between provinces on labour standards and credential recognition. I believe in getting things done one step at a time. And the bill brought forward by the member for Midland would've been a solid first step.

My constituents in Dawson Trail want progress, not politics. Back in Dawson Trail, people care about whether something helps them and their families. Does this bill make it easier for local businesses to grow? Yes. Some of the businesses I can think of in Dawson Trail that could benefit are the many farmers, from the egg farmers, dairy farmers, hog farmers, broiler chicken farmers, sheep farmers, goat farmers, Arctic char farmers, beef farmers, bison farmers and grain farmers, to name a few. Others that can benefit

from Bill 47 are our local restaurants such as the Lorette bar, Dawson Trail Motor Inn, Chicken Chef, nine and dine clubhouse and Brian's Drive-Inn.

Other businesses in Lorette that potentially benefit from Bill 47, The Fair Trade in Canada, international trade mutual recognition, Act and Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act are LCP Bookkeeping, 99 Marketing Pro, Fox Fabrication, Building Products & Concrete Supply, Lorette Home Hardware, Kiwi Construction & Maintenance Inc., Arranz Building Solutions, Pegu *[phonetic]* guys creative, Lorette Golf Course, C&C garden centre *[phonetic]*, Lorette's River Ridge.

A few others that potentially will benefit from Bill 47 are a Marquee Builders, Storage Bros, the Clearview Co-op Lorette C Store, and in the past I've talked about the value of co-ops in all the small towns and their communities.

Others are the Village Insurance Brokers, Valkyrie Construction, Harper Electric, Nathan Reimer Custom Homes, Ready Set Welding *[phonetic]*, Lorette Towing, Rollie's Septic Service Ltd.—and to anyone who lives in rural Manitoba, they understand the importance of the service they offer—Accurate Excavating, Charlene bookkeeping; Haines Building Maintenance & Janitorial, Davies Branding.

As I go through the list of businesses that Bill 47 may impact, I want members in the Chamber to realize that this is just one of the communities I represent, and there are other communities with equally impressive numbers of small and large businesses.

Carry on with my list, just in Lorette: make—Macro Homes Inc., Willett Property Care; Lagua *[phonetic]* Bookkeeping Solutions; Seine River Properties; Centennial Gravel & Excavating; D-G homes and renovations incorporated *[phonetic]*.

And just before I get into other businesses, I want to step back and talk about how a bill like Bill 47 helps with the local economy, and I'm thinking about Centennial Gravel & Excavating. I've been to many a graduation where Centennial Gravel & Excavating actually provides scholarships to kids within the community that are graduating, and it's just great to see how businesses will give back, and they're just one example of the many that do.

T and—TCJ Insulation is another one that would benefit from Bill 47; Guardian Advanced Solutions, Dawson Trail Country Store, Distinct Exteriors; Dawson Servicentre Ltd. And these are just some of

the 86-plus businesses that Bill 47 can have an effect on. And that's just in Lorette, Manitoba.

Shifting over to Landmark, MB, where there are 50-plus businesses alone that would also benefit from bill 43. Over in Ste. Anne, we find another 90-plus businesses.

Would a bill like 47—and I'm not forgetting about communities like Anola and Richer and those; I'm just highlighting some of the bigger ones at this moment—does it open opportunities for Manitoba to make goods, to get into new markets? Yes, a bill like this does. Does it promote buying local and supporting Canadian jobs? Absolutely, it will.

We can always make it better, but let's not stand still. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll be the first to say no bill is perfect. We should always be open to improving it, listening to feedback, tightening up the regulations, making sure we're being fair and transparent, but let's not let perfect be the enemy of progress.

If we wait for a bill that pleases everyone a hundred per cent, we will be waiting forever, and in the meantime, our businesses will keep struggling, our workers will keep facing delays and our economy will fall behind. Let's celebrate Bill 47, buy Manitoba, buy Canadian day. Let's keep building partnerships with other provinces, and let's come back with more reforms down the road to strengthen credential recognition and open doors.

When we think about all the things that this bill is going to help, I can also think of, like, the colonies that are in this riding. I've got colonies that, you know, definitely contribute to the Manitoba economy, and I can think of Springfield colony and some of the great things that they've done, especially in their manufacturing of cabinets.

And a bill like Bill 47 not only gives them further opportunity to grow but it also allows them, when they're buying machinery from Germany—I was there touring and I saw their great CNC machine. Unfortunately, they were still setting it up, but I haven't had the opportunity to see it in action yet. But they were quite proud of the fact that this machinery came from Germany and that they were going to be operating it here in Manitoba.

I know that they are very, very proud of their business and would hate to see interprovincial trade become a barrier to the things that they need, as well as global trade, because, again, they're contributing to the Manitoba economy.

You think about the colonies as well when it comes to their diversifying—not just in one business, but they'll have, as well as farming businesses, so they'll also be in the agricultural sector, they'll be dealing with other industries as well. And they employ, especially in Springfield colony, people from outside of the colony to help in the manufacturing of their cabinets.

I'm going to jump over to the Ridgeland colony, and I don't know if members in the Chamber have had the opportunity to try their great Arctic char, but it's a fantastic fish, and it's actually quite delicious. They sell it at the St. Norbert Farmers' Market if members are looking for somewhere to go get it. I know a bill like 47 would help these colonies like the Ridgeland to be able to expand their market into, you know, other provinces.

And also I know that bill—and, sorry, Arctic char was an idea that they came up with, and there's great and—you know, innovation and ideas that come out of a lot of these colonies. I know they also have grain operations and other farming operations as well.

I do quite appreciate going to the colonies and, you know, reading and being part of their—I Love To Read Month and so on, but I'm kind of getting away from Bill 47 here, but just wanted to add that in there.

I know I also have a colony named Heartland colony, and they repair and purchase machinery and so on and so forth and then resell. And I know that they do a great amount of trade, I'm sure, when it comes to parts and so on and so forth, and a bill like Bill 47 would greatly impact and help them as well.

* (16:50)

I'm going to move over now to businesses in Anola. And I know I said it's a smaller market, but at the same time, I can think of the Chinese food place there. And, again, I've mentioned this in speeches in the past, how it's great to see, you know, there tends to be one in each small community—each small rural community. And I can personally say that even for dinner tonight, I'm ordering from the one in Ste. Anne.

So I know, again, let's get back to Bill 47, the fair trade and Canadian-free trade in Canada—internal trade and mutual recognition act and amendments to the commemoration of days, weeks and months act, buy Manitoba, buy Canada day.

When I think of Anola, I know there's several little restaurants as well there. And I can also think of how they would benefit from fair trade, whether it be

through their food or whether it be through their, you know, products they need when it comes to the restaurant industry. I can also think of some of the restaurant supplies and so on and so forth.

I also like to think about the—you know, there's a school there, and there's a daycare, and there's all these things in these vibrant little communities and how each of these small businesses contributes to that economy and to that community.

I can also think about Ste. Anne, just jumping back, and I know I'm well aware of the great many businesses. And it's always dangerous when you start to mention names because you tend to forget some of them. But Bill 47 would not only help these businesses in this community, but it also would help things like the hospital, the local hospital, when it comes to equipment.

And, you know, some of the recruiting, I'm sure, would be beneficial if we can lose some of the credentials that are not recognized and that are very similar from other jurisdictions. I know the—that this hospital, in particular, does a great deal of work in trying to take some of the pressure off of other hospitals and definitely is looking for regional designation in order to get better funding. And I know with the helipad and all that, it's been the community that's gotten behind and built these things.

When we think about Bill 47 and other areas it could help, I think of the villa here in the community and how they are an ecosystem in of themselves. I mean, you've got—on one side, you've got the PCH, which I'm sure would also benefit from free trade across Canada.

You also—or, fair trade—sorry, not necessarily free trade. Then you've also got, within that villa, you've got the restaurant—or not restaurant, but food services, and the amount of people they employ from the surrounding communities and how they also would benefit from fair trade when it comes to their products that they require, whether to feed the residents and/or, you know, prepare that food for the residents.

I know that villa also has an independent living area. So if your loved one is in one section over in the PCH, you can still live independently within the same structure. And it's just really a fantastic place. And yes, it also is offering French-language services, which are desperately needed in this area.

So as we think about fair trade, we can also think about some of the little local markets, the farmers' markets, and so on and so forth. And they really are a good example of an economy within an economy. I mean, they contribute by renting their booths and the products that they need would greatly, I guess, reduce some of the burdens and costs if we could get more fair trade across from one jurisdiction to another.

I'm also thinking about the—I mentioned earlier in my speech about the farmers in the area, and I know there's farmers such as goat farmers, and I'm specifically going to bring that one up—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The next time this matter is before the House, the honourable member will have nine minutes remaining.

The time being 5 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 29, 2025

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The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>