



Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 201—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Right to Religious Observance)

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): I move, second by the MLA for Tyndall Park, that Bill 201, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Right to Religious Observance), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wasyliw: I'm pleased to introduce the employment standards act amendment act, right to religious observance, a bill that would ensure Manitoba's labour laws apply fairly to all workers regardless of their beliefs.

Current legislation provides employees with the ability to refuse work on Sundays for a religious observance. However, this protection is tied to a specific day and doesn't reflect the diversity of religious practices and beliefs in Manitoba today.

This bill would modernize the law by allowing employees to observe religious holidays that are meaningful to them while requiring employers to reasonably accommodate those requests, unless it causes undue hardship. It would also ensure that employees who do not observe traditional religious holidays are treated equally under the law.

As Manitoba becomes more diverse, our laws must reflect that diversity and ensure fairness for all workers.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Bill 202—The Financial Administration Amendment Act

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): I move, seconded by the MLA for Tyndall Park, that Bill 202, The Financial Administration Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wasyliw: I'm pleased to introduce The Financial Administration Amendment Act, a bill that would ensure organizations receiving public funding are complying with Manitoba's human rights and labour laws. Public money should not be used to support organizations that violate the rights of Manitobans, yet there are situations where organizations receiving provincial funding have policies or practices that may contravene laws such as The Human Rights Code or workplace protections.

This bill would require the Province to suspend or terminate funding when a recipient is found to have breached these laws. At the same time, it allows for funding to be reinstated where it's in the public interest, with transparency around that decision.

This is a straightforward accountability measure. If an organization wants public funding, it must respect the laws that protect Manitobans.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

No further introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Tashina Houle-Schlup

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I rise today with deep pride to recognize a remarkable leader and person, Tashina [phonetic] Houle-Schlup. Her work encourages all of us to think more carefully about how stories are shared and, more importantly, who carries the heart and responsibility of telling them.

As the head of Indigenous programming and engagement at the Manitoba Museum, Tashina is helping transform that space into something truly special. Under her guidance, these programs have become a living space where knowledge is carried forward through experiences and storytelling.

Tashina is an Anishinaabe woman with strong ties to Ebb and Flow First Nation, and that connection shines through in everything she does. She cares—the care she brings to bringing relationships with Elders, artists, families and Knowledge Keepers shapes every project she leads. Her approach ensures that every story shared is held with respect and carried with love.

You can feel this especially in her Indigenous Motherhood exhibit. This exhibit brings together teachings, objects and lived experiences that explores Indigenous approaches to pregnancy, birth and raising children. It shares how these practices have been carried across generations and how they continue to guide families today, creating a space where visitors can engage with these teachings as lived knowledge rather than something from the past.

Tashina's impact extends far beyond the museum's walls. She creates spaces for Indigenous people to see themselves reflected in ways that honour who they are while inviting others to engage with these stories more openly and thoughtfully.

Tashina, thank you for your leadership, your heart and the pride that you bring to Manitoba. Our community is stronger because of you.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing Tashina Houle-Schoop [phonetic], who is joining us online.

Miigwech, Tashina, for all of the work that you are doing.

Westman Multicultural Festival

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): It's a pleasure to rise today to recognize one of Brandon's most vibrant and cherished traditions: the Westman Multicultural

Festival. Each year, this festival reminds us how fortunate we are to live in a community where so many cultures are not only represented, but proudly shared.

One of the things I've always loved is that, for three days, you can travel the world without ever leaving Brandon. In the middle of winter, stepping into each pavilion feels like a winter holiday—an escape filled with unique foods, music and cultural experiences from around the world without going far.

* (13:40)

All 11 pavilions this year did not disappoint. I felt welcomed at every stop, and I'm deeply grateful for the heart and effort each pavilion puts into keeping this tradition alive.

I'd like to acknowledge Chairman Enver Naidoo and his leadership and dedication. It is especially fitting to see Enver chairing the festival, as his work as executive director of Westman immigration services helps welcome so many newcomers into our community. His commitment to inclusion and cultural celebration is reflected in every aspect of this event.

I also want to extend a heartfelt thanks to the entire organizing team and the many volunteers who devote countless hours to bringing this festival to life. Their passion and hard work ensures that this celebration continues to thrive year after year, many whom are joining us here in the gallery today.

Their efforts strengthen our community and highlight the diversity that makes Brandon such a welcoming place.

I ask all my colleagues to stand and recognize my guests in the gallery, and I ask to have their names entered into Hansard.

Thank you.

Maria Alvarado, Efemena Esosuakpo, Ana Evangelista, Alexis Hernandez Rivas, Alessandra Iturburu Enriquez, Ababayoh Kena, Enver Naidoo, Hannah Stollery, Abukar Sufi, Katerine Isable Tinoco Parra, Gedeisha Williams.

Recognizing Seine River Garden Centres

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): I rise today to celebrate St. Mary's Nursery & Garden Centre, Ron Paul Garden Centre and Lacoste Garden Centre, three incredible local businesses that help make Seine River and the rest of Manitoba more beautiful.

With spring just around the corner, many Manitobans are starting to think about getting back outside, working in their gardens and spending time in

their yards. In Seine River, we are so fortunate to have local, family-run garden centres that provide us what we need to create beautiful outdoor spaces.

St. Mary's Nursery & Garden Centre recently marked its 40th anniversary, a real testament to the important role it plays in our community and to the unique experience it offers through its greenhouses, display gardens and gift shop, all in one place.

Ron Paul Garden Centre has been serving our community since 1965, with roots going back to the '50s. It has grown into a trusted green hub for Seine River, supporting local jobs, mentoring young workers and community initiatives while offering expert advice and locally grown plants.

Lacoste Garden Centre, which has been family owned since 1942, really stands out for the care that they put into the customer experience. Their staff are passionate and welcoming, and they work hard to make sure every visitor feels comfortable and supported.

Together, these three local businesses employ over 350 Manitobans, creating good local jobs, supporting families and helping our community to thrive.

To Carla from St Mary's, Ray from Ron Paul and David from Lacoste, thank you for being here today and for your hard work and dedication.

I hope you continue to grow, inspire and keep our community blooming for many years to come.

I ask my colleagues to please rise and join me in recognizing and celebrating these outstanding local businesses.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Kin Club Volunteers

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I rise today to recognize and celebrate the incredible work of Kin clubs in our communities, and I want to welcome some of those members to the gallery here today.

These are volunteers that truly embody the Kin Canada motto: Serving the Community's Greatest Need. Through countless hours of service, fundraising and community leadership, they strengthen Manitoba.

From Gladstone Kin Club, we have members Gord Patterson, Teresa Roberts and Darcy Hunter, who often host Kin trivia nights, Kin Kindness events and have recently participated in the national food drive, all in support of global and local initiatives..

From Neepawa, we have Amanda Naughton-Gale and Dennie Phillips joining us here, and their club has

brought energy and creativity to the town through events like the 100K walking challenge, Hugs for the Holidays and, most recently, the first-ever Mini Putt Masters, all of which, again, raise funds and bring people together. Their work continues as long—strong legacy of supporting projects like the Kinsmen Kourts II an assisted living facility in Neepawa.

Brian Bambenek and volunteer Jack Ross join us from the Treherne area where the Kin Club have shown outstanding innovation and volunteerism through their biweekly refuse pickup. The club recently held the 60th anniversary fundraiser event for Sal's Saloon. Again, this community continues raising funds and investing in projects for the future in Treherne.

Sadie Tait leads the Kinetite Club in MacGregor where the club partnered with local organizations for a STARS air ambulance fundraiser hockey game, another important initiative that extends far beyond the community.

What makes these clubs so remarkable is that every initiative is driven by volunteers, people who care deeply about their neighbours and their communities. Across Manitoba and Canada, Kin members have in—contributed over \$1 billion to 'charital' causes since 1920.

To all Kin members: thank you for your leadership, generosity, your unwavering commitment to service. Your work truly makes a difference and helps build Manitoba stronger.

I ask that all my colleagues join us in welcoming and congratulating Kin members.

Kirkfield Park Early Childhood Educators

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): Honourable Speaker, today I rise to recognize the dedicated daycare workers and the early childhood educators in Kirkfield Park.

Every day these caring professionals, they show up with patience, they show up with compassion and unwavering commitment to Manitoba's youngest learners. At centres like the Westwood Community Child Care and Horizons Children's Centre, educators are doing far more than supervising play; they are helping to shape the next generation of learners and leaders.

Early childhood education is foundational. It's where children first learn how to share and solve problems; they build confidence and they discover their unique strengths. The early childhood educators in Kirkfield Park create safe, nurturing environments where children can grow, explore and thrive.

Honourable Speaker, this work is not easy. It requires energy, it requires skill and a lot of heart. Daycare workers, they support families; they enable parents to pursue careers and education; and they help keep our economy moving. They are essential to our communities.

As a government, I'm so proud that we understand that investing in early learning means investing in Manitoba's future. And that future is being shaped every day in the classroom and child-care centres across Kirkfield Park and across Manitoba.

To the early childhood educators and daycare workers in our community: thank you for the care and the patience and the dedication. Thank you that—all the love that you bring to your work every single day. The support you provide to children and families like mine have made a real difference, and Manitoba is stronger because of it.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Before moving on to oral questions, there are some guests in the gallery.

I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Westman Multicultural Festival: Katherine Isable Tinoco Parra, Efemena Esosukapo [*phonetic*], Alessandra Iturbubru Eniquez [*phonetic*], Abu [*phonetic*] Sufi, Ana Evangelista, Abayoh [*phonetic*] Kena, Alice [*phonetic*] Hernandez Rivas, Hannah Stollery, Enver Naidoo, Mario Lavardo [*phonetic*], Gardisha [*phonetic*] Williams, who are guests are the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen).

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

Seated in the Speaker's Gallery, we have with us today from the Legislative Assembly, Deanna Wilson, executive director of administration; Debbie Campbell, director of finance; Eduardo Zaldumbi [*phonetic*], manager of finance.

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

* (13:50)

And I think most of these guests had been previously introduced, but possibly not all, so I will do it again. I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Gord Paterson, Teresa Roberts, Darcy Hunter, Amanda Naughton-Gale, Dennie Phillips,

Brian Bambenek, Jack Ross, Guy Madill and they are guests of the honourable member for Agassiz (Ms. Byram).

And we welcome you all here today as well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Cost of Living for Manitobans Request for Affordability Measures

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Sadly, we live in a time where families are struggling to pay their bills, put healthy food on their table, or pay for extracurricular activities for their kids. Affordability is becoming harder and harder every single day under this NDP government. And yet, this NDP government has increased the average property taxes in Manitoba by 20 per cent across the province.

It has been leaked that in this year's NDP budget, that they will have a measly 6 per cent rebate increase to their property tax rebates. Let's do the math: a 20 per cent increase on property taxes with only a 6 per cent increase to rebate still means Manitobans are paying more money under this NDP government than they were under the previous PCs.

The Premier knows that life is unaffordable under his government.

When is he going to make real changes and real announcements to live up to the commitment that he promised to make life more affordable, or will he continue to play with pennies in front of Manitobans?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Wanted to put on the record permanently, today, that I appreciate the opposition working with us yesterday so that we could skip question period and this sort of rhetoric and instead spend the time honouring our late colleague, Amanda Lathlin. I had the opportunity to say some things about Amanda, but today I want to say thanks to the opposition for working together with us on that.

When we're talking about affordability, the budget that you're about to hear is going to remove the PST from everything at the grocery store. It's going to make life more affordable for you and your family—families who are rushing home and got to grab that rotisserie chicken, a prepared salad and a case of Bubby, guess what? No more tax. They taxed you; we're lifting the tax.

We're bringing you tax relief when it comes to property taxes, too: \$1,700. Last time I checked, \$1,700 wasn't measly to too many families across

Manitoba. Maybe he wants to check in with them instead of writing questions all by his lonesome.

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

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

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): That shows you how to—out of touch this Premier is. If he actually did his own grocery shopping, he would know that a lot of grocery items are already exempt from PST. But maybe under him, you will save 7 cents on a can of pop or you'll save 63 cents on a chicken rotisserie, Honourable Speaker.

We're talking about real savings on this side of the House. Manitobans are struggling to pay their bills and they're applauding a 7-cent savings on a can of pop. That \$1,700 rebate he talks about, that doesn't come into effect until next year. Manitobans are struggling today, and the Premier wants to joke and laugh about affordability crisis in this province.

So I'll ask the Premier again: if he wants to have real savings, why won't he support our call to increase the basic personal tax exemption to \$30,000 so the average Manitoban family can save \$3,000—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Let's keep it down so I can hear.

Mr. Khan: It was getting hard to hear with the Premier laughing so hard.

Will the Premier stand up and talk about how he'll make life more affordable for Manitobans, or will he continue to laugh like he is now?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Well, the reason—and I know it's not nice to laugh at people when they stumble, but I couldn't contain my laughter when he stumbled on his little path to relatability there. Chicken rotisserie? Is this—has he never been to Safeway or Costco? I thought he was one of the bros. What do bros like more than eating a rotisserie chicken, Honourable Speaker?

And guess what's not going to be taxed anymore? Rotisserie chicken, prepared salads, can of Bubly. Grab a whole case of Bubly. This is going to put hundreds of dollars back in your pocket, just like we did when we cut the provincial gas tax.

They want to throw stones. Why didn't they cut the gas tax when they were in power? Why didn't they take the PST off of groceries? They chose to run off

and attack kids who are part of the LGBT community; we got elected and we decided to save you money and cut your taxes.

Why don't we have another vote on it? What would you prefer—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Khan: Another big flashy announcement or leak by this NDP government with no substance. Nothing behind it other than pennies. This Premier is saving you pennies; on this side of the House, we want to save you hundreds and thousands of dollars.

The Premier refuses to make real life savings for you because under this NDP government, Manitoba's economy is dead last. This Premier is outspending what he's bringing into the province—another failure by this NDP government. If he knew—or, again, like I said, if he went grocery shopping, he would know that a lot of items are already exempt from PST.

So when will the Premier do something that actually makes life more affordable? Or does he actually think that saving two cents on a litre of milk will make your life better? Does he think that saving you one and a half cents on a litre of gas is making your life better?

Why won't the Premier make real decisions and support the PCs on increasing your basic personal tax exemption to \$30,000, saving you \$3,000 a year?

Mr. Kinew: Well, there you go. There's the 2027—or sooner—PC election campaign: no savings at the grocery store; no savings when you go to the gas station; no savings on your property taxes.

If that's what they want to run on, look out, minority communities in Manitoba, because wedge politics are going to be the only thing that they have to try and stir up votes.

On our side, we don't have to pick on minorities. We don't have to attack LGBT. We don't have to attack the families involved with the landfill search. You know why? Because we got real things that Manitobans want, like fixing health care, like saving you money at the grocery store, saving you money at the gas station.

And guess what we got in the budget that the rules prevent me from waving around at this very moment. We've got the best balanced budget number in the entire country. That means we're doing better than your Conservative premiers out east. We're doing better—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

**Critical Incident Review of Moberg Case
Request for Update on Recommendations**

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Earl Moberg was a loving father, grandfather and long-time teacher from North Kildonan. He was living with dementia when he went missing in December 2023. He has never been found and tragically is presumed deceased. Mr. Moberg's case was the subject of a critical incident review.

Would the Premier please indicate the status of those recommendations?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): When it comes to losing somebody that's close to you, I think everybody in this Chamber has a story to share. And that's why we connect with empathy when it comes to families like the one that's being invoked by the member for Roblin.

When we think about what it's like to have a loved one—[interjection]—who raised you—and I'll ask the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) to stop heckling when we're talking about Alzheimer's.

When we're talking about a loved one who raised you as a parent and doesn't remember your name, it's a tough thing to see. And so that's why the—our heart goes out. Even in spite of the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) criticizing the fact that we're building a personal-care home that has an Alzheimer's village in it in his own constituency, the members from the Progressive Conservative Party ought to know when to heckle and when not to heckle.

On this side of the House, we'll work with this family and seniors across the province to ensure that there's a brighter hope for those living with Alzheimer's and dementia.

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

**Critical Incident Reviews—Dementia Care
Program and Service Recommendations**

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Clearly the Premier needs to get up to speed on this file. Mr. Moberg's family have been tireless advocates for improved dementia care in Manitoba because they want to ensure that what happened to him doesn't happen to anyone else.

* (14:00)

Following other recent tragedies in Manitoba's health-care system, this minister and this Premier have talked repeatedly about critical incident reviews.

But if the recommendations in those reviews are not acted upon, the review is not worth the paper that it's written on.

What additional resources has this minister provided to the home-care program to ensure that the recommendations in this critical incident review are fully implemented?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Having a loved one with Alzheimer's, with dementia, it's a very difficult thing. And what I was trying to get across in the comments earlier is that we have compassion and that that compassion moves us to action.

When it comes to the PCs on the other side of the House, the member for Roblin perhaps should spend some time speaking to her colleague from Brandon West or Lac du Bonnet and say, don't interrupt because you're actually getting in the way of important information being shared with the people of Manitoba. In this instance, it was their heckling that got in the way of me sharing this important information.

When we're talking about the review and the Moberg family, every single recommendation has been accepted and actioned. If they want to end the heckling here, we can get a lot more business done in this esteemed Chamber.

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

Mrs. Cook: It's absolutely ludicrous to watch this Premier chide anyone about heckling when he is the worst one in this Chamber for heckling. Earl Moberg never got the help he needed to live in community with dementia. His wife Brenda asked over and over again for help caring for her husband, and she was denied.

The critical incident review identified gaps in the availability of home care, respite and family support, adult day programs, transportation, risk assessment and safety planning. Sadly, it is too late for Earl Moberg, but for the over 20,000 Manitobans living with dementia today, these recommendations could make a real difference.

It has been well over two years since Mr. Moberg went missing. When will the findings of the critical incident review be fully addressed?

Mr. Kinew: When it comes to this family and any family out there who has gone through the experience of hearing the findings of a critical incident, our hearts go out to you. Certainly, in this instance, we have been in communication with the family; the Health Minister

has also been in communication with leaders who are clinical experts, as well as advocacy organizations in the space of dementia and Alzheimer's.

When we're talking about heckling in this Chamber, the permanent record will only show two people heckling today: the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen), the member for Lac du Bonnet, maybe a little bit from the Leader of the Opposition.

But when it comes to taking action, I'm proud to report to you, Honourable Speaker, that the vacancy rate in home care has decreased both when we're talking about health-care aides and when we're talking about nurses, thanks to the leadership of the best Health Minister in the entire country.

So there's important work that's being done, there's more work to do and there's a heck of a lot to lose if we ever go back to the cuts and closures of the failed PC health ministers and their staff.

Government Record on Taxes Request for Tax Relief Measures

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Over the past two and a half years, this NDP government has taken more money from the pockets of Manitobans. Last year's budget cancelled the indexation of tax brackets and the basic personal amount, pushing more Manitobans into higher tax brackets. While 50 per cent of Manitobans are within \$200 from insolvency, this NDP created an \$82-million tax on those struggling Manitobans.

Will this NDP government stop bracket creep, keep indexation and raise the basic personal amount for those Manitobans that are struggling the most?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, we're doing the work of reducing costs for Manitobans. It started with a tax cut for middle-class Manitobans across the province. When we raised the basic personal exemption, we changed brackets to have more of your income tax at a lower rate.

Then, of course, we brought in a fuel tax holiday for an entire year, followed by a permanent fuel tax cut, something the members opposite never sought to do. They never sought to provide any relief to Manitobans struggling with the prices of fuel.

And we brought in a hydro rate freeze. Of course, our education property tax credit, starting at \$1,500; last year at tax time, \$1,600; and as we announced today, going up to \$1,700 next year. We're saving Manitobans money.

While we reduced our costs, we're doing that in a fiscally sustainable way, nothing like the crazy proposal—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Midland, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, the gas tax ended, the rate freeze is done and all this NDP has brought forward is a band-aid solution of increasing \$100 on the credit that does not even make up for the education property tax increases that many families across Manitoba are seeing.

What sounds better, Honourable Speaker? A 75 per cent education property tax rebate that Manitobans would be receiving under a PC government or a \$1,700-band-aid solution that doesn't fix the problems?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, you can see why Manitobans were left with a \$2-billion deficit and a giant fiscal disaster due to their poor management; that's their record. They developed this proposal on the back of a napkin and they didn't even finish the proposal. They didn't even know how much it cost.

The question of the member opposite is, are we going to be left with another two billion-, three-billion-dollar deficit with their leadership? Or what are they going to cut? We know that their proposal wasn't thought out.

What are we doing? Meaningful, targeted reductions to your costs. Whether it's on the costs of owning a home, whether it's you as a renter, whether it's now on your food, we're going to keep lowering costs for Manitobans each and every day.

Education System—Funding Model Impact on Municipalities and School Boards

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Taxpayers, Manitoba School Boards Association, association for Manitoba municipalities, they are all feeling the pressures by the education cuts by this Education Minister and the NDP government.

This NDP government is constantly downloading to the municipalities and Manitoba taxpayers.

When will this Minister of Education announce and come clean with Manitobans—when is she going to announce the new funding model on education here in Manitoba?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Manitobans know: where they cut we build. It's—the fact of the matter here in Manitoba where they cut education budgets year after year after year, we work with our partners to grow education here in Manitoba. And why are we doing that, Honourable Speaker? We're doing that to invest in our kids.

Every single school division, every single year since we have been elected, has received an increase. We're going to keep doing that work in partnership with school divisions, in partnership with municipalities, and we're going to do it while we're making life affordable for Manitobans. I cannot wait to talk about the great news in Budget 2026 a little bit later this afternoon, thanks to the great work of the greatest Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) in Canada—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Ewasko: Well, don't take my word for it, Honourable Speaker. Let's see what Louis Riel School Division has to say. In 2023-24 school year, under the PC government, Louis Riel School Division received \$8 million in funding. Under this NDP government, under this NDP minister, \$2.8 million, and it's getting worse.

You know what else Louis Riel School Division says? They're saying our financial position has eroded, Honourable Speaker.

So again to the minister: When is she going to stop downloading to Manitoba taxpayers, school boards and municipalities?

MLA Schmidt: Manitobans voted for change in 2023, and thank goodness they did. Manitobans have rejected cuts when it comes to education. Manitobans have rejected a tax on kids and a tax on teachers.

The truth is, Honourable Speaker, there has never been more invested in education than this year—nearly \$2 billion. And why do we do that? Why do we do it? We do it for the kids. We do it so that kids here in Manitoba, like, since we were elected there are more than 832 more educators that were hired in partnership with school divisions that are giving one-on-one time with every student.

Do you know what else we did, Honourable Speaker? A \$30-million universal school nutrition program—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Manitoba Jobs Agreement Request to Cancel

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): This is not a listening government. They never consulted Manitoba's construction industry before foisting the job-killing Manitoba jobs agreement on them. And even today, after months of industry leaders calling for changes, the government continues to ignore their concerns.

The MJA is a bad deal for Manitoba. It shuts out 88 per cent of Manitobans from being able to participate in building our hospitals, schools, roads and bridges.

* (14:10)

Will the minister stand in the House today and cancel this exclusionary and divisive deal today?

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): I want to thank the member for that question.

Through—to you, to the member from Borderland, Honourable Speaker, every single person working on MJA is better off. There's no division.

Honourable Speaker, they will have fair wages, good benefits and safe work site.

For this side of the House, we care about Manitoba workers. We care about Manitobans. We will always prioritize Manitoba workers, unlike 'oppo-side', what they did during their time, Honourable Speaker. Where did they create the jobs? In Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Mr. Guenter: Well, that minister will want to check his facts because in a recent Winnipeg Free Press editorial, Manitoba's major construction associations wrote, and I quote: If local shop contractors are discouraged from bidding, provincial capacity shrinks. Over time, this may force labour to be imported from outside Manitoba. End quote. That's from the experts.

Why is this minister defending a bad deal that kicks Manitobans in our own homegrown construction companies to the curb and replaces them with workers from large outside corporations?

MLA Sandhu: I want to thank the member for that question.

On our \$3.7-billion capital project, Honourable Speaker, we are prioritizing Manitoba workers. Manitobans, you have the first priority working on

those jobs. We will always prioritize Manitoba workers. As I said in my previous answer, all they did was create jobs in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Mr. Guenter: You know, there's no need for this deal. There hasn't been a strike on a Manitoba construction site in decades. Up until this MJA, we had labour harmony, both union and non-union Manitobans working together.

So it's become quite—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: —clear that the only reason this NDP government is so insistent on implementing this job-killing MJA is because it allows them to skim a little off the top of public projects and grease their public fortunes, with no accountability for Manitobans.

Will the minister—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: —tell the Premier to walk—will the minister tell the Premier today to walk away from this terrible deal?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Minister for Public Service Delivery is such a strong minister; he doesn't need to debase himself answering nonsense like this.

So allow me to step in and clear up a few facts: labour harmony—labour harmony? During the last election in which he found his way to the opposition benches, there was a strike; there was a strike at MPI. The first thing that our Attorney General (Mr. Wiebe) had to do was to end the strike with a decent deal for workers and a decent deal for you.

And when it comes to skimming a little bit off the top, he must be talking about Heather Stefanson and the member for Red River North (Mr. Wharton), who were the first people ever to be fined and had a little skimmed off the top of their net worth because of them breaking the law.

And just to bring it home, I want to share the word from the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé) on the topic, and he said: I have difficulty, as someone who has a moral compass, to sit with a party that seems to be okay with allowing a member like that to continue—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

School Officials in River East Transcona Division Assault Incident—Law Enforcement Reporting Policy

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): The relationship between schools and law enforcement is a vital link in ensuring students are safe. We saw that in Brandon when the relationship that the SRO formed with students ensured rapid communication during an unprecedented assault at Neelin High School.

So it's alarming to see a recent article where it revealed that school officials in River East Transcona refused to communicate with law enforcement and attempted to deal with an instance of sexual assault internally.

What has this Minister of Education done to ensure that the appropriate authorities are always contacted when incidents such as this occur?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): When it comes to the safety and security of students here in Manitoba, there's nothing more important for myself as minister, for our team, certainly as a mother as well. So when it comes to the safety of students when they're at school, nothing could be more important and nothing should be taken more seriously.

That being said, Honourable Speaker, the situation that the member opposite speaks of, as he should well know, is before the courts, so it would be absolutely inappropriate for anyone in this Chamber to make any further comment about specifics. But what I can say is, again, the safety and security of every single student here in Manitoba is of the utmost importance—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Balcaen: It's about the policies, not the court decision at this point, Honourable Speaker.

When the mother questioned the school's inaction and fought to ensure her daughter was protected, she was told that the accused's right to public education superseded any safety concerns and that her daughter could leave if she felt unsafe.

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection spared no criticism, and I quote, asking a child if she's okay and also telling her that she's the one that could leave the classroom if she feels unsafe is insanity.

Does this minister support victim blaming? If not, what has she done to ensure students are supported in the future?

MLA Schmidt: Again, Honourable Speaker, there is nothing more serious, more sacred and more important than the safety of not only students at school but, really, all youth here in Manitoba. It would be irresponsible for me to make any comment about the specifics of this case.

What I can tell you is that we will continue to work with all of our school division partners to make sure that the safety of every single student in Manitoba is taken seriously. We will continue to work with law enforcement. This is something—this is work that we're doing across government. I'm incredibly grateful to work along the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) and to make sure that there are increased and strengthened pathways between the Department of Education and the Department of Justice.

We know that—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

New High School for Tyndall Park Update on Construction Timeline

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): After some back and forth with this government, I was happy to hear during education Estimates back on May 20, 2025, that a new high school would, in fact, be built in Tyndall Park, specifically on Commercial Avenue on the north side of Inkster.

I was hoping that, because it's been nearly a year, that the minister could provide some details as to when construction is expected to begin.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Thank you very much to the member from Tyndall Park for that question, and it gives me great pleasure to stand in this House and talk about the investments that we're making in our kids here in Manitoba, both in funding of schools but also in building new schools, in the member for Tyndall Park's constituency and in constituencies all across Manitoba.

I can share with her that there will be more news in the budget, in Budget 2026, about that school and the other 11 schools. We're going to announce all the progress that we've made on the 11 schools that we announced in budget 2025. We're so excited recently to announce a brand new school for the DSFM in the beautiful constituency of St. Boniface.

So there's going to be a lot of great news to share in budget 2025. Progress on the schools—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

MLA Lamoureux: Plans for a new school in Tyndall Park were initially created by the former government several years ago. It was unfortunate that after the last election, we learned that the school was going to be cut. However, to this government's credit, they brought it back when they saw the high demand for it.

I share this to highlight that a new school in Tyndall Park has been delayed long enough, and I'm eagerly awaiting now to see what's going to happen later in today's budget.

I was hoping that the minister could share just a few more details about the school. For example, what is the catchment area for the students and when will classes be up and running?

* (14:20)

MLA Schmidt: Thank you to the member for Tyndall Park for a little bit of that history lesson.

I will correct the record, though, Honourable Speaker, for the Chamber. You know, the previous government did announce a school—they announced a whole bunch of schools—but, unfortunately, those schools were written—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

MLA Schmidt: They can continue clapping for the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Schmidt: —schools that they didn't build. The plan for those schools, Honourable Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Schmidt: —was written on the back of the same napkin that they wrote their budget on. Those plans never went to Treasury Board.

On this side of the House, instead of announcing fake schools, we're going to announce real schools with real dollars put behind them in Tyndall Park and in St. Boniface, in Brandon and all across this beautiful province so that we can—why, Honourable Speaker? We're doing it for—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

MLA Lamoureux: On January 7, just a couple of months ago, I was advised in a letter from the minister that discussions with the Winnipeg school board pertaining the new school in Tyndall Park had begun. The population surrounding the school only continues to grow, and parents and students alike continue to be affected by class sizes and necessary transportation requirements.

Can the minister provide an update with respect to these discussions with the school divisions?

MLA Schmidt: We are so thrilled for the excellent relationships and partnerships that we have with school divisions right across this great province. We have partnerships with the Winnipeg School Division that's going to ensure that this school is built in central Winnipeg.

And you know what's going to be built in that school, Honourable Speaker? There's going to be child care put in that school, not only in central Winnipeg, but we're going to be adding schools with child-care centres in Devonshire Park. We're going to be adding schools with child-care centres in Waverley and schools with child-care centres in Brandon.

We are going to be addressing the need, after years and years of PCs' failures and cuts, the failure to invest in education, the failure to actually plan and budget for new schools. The cost of new schools skyrocketed—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Health-Care System Investments Government Update

MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo): Honourable Speaker, this NDP government is fixing the damage done to our health-care system by the former PC government and rebuilding it for the future. We are reopening emergency departments, hiring more front-line staff and expanding access to care for Manitobans.

Can the Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care please tell Manitobans about some of the amazing health-care investments made by this NDP government in the last fiscal year?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, in this past year, we've hired thousands of net-new health-care workers, expanded surgery capacity with new clinics, like the one at the Grace Hospital, and we've made historic investments in improving women's health care in Manitoba.

We're also investing in new personal-care homes to help seniors. We're training more nurses and doctors than we ever have before and retaining thousands of health-care workers working in those specific areas. We're focused on reducing wait times, improving access, making sure that Manitobans have a public health-care system that they can count on.

We're fixing health care across this province, and we cannot wait to share all of the incredibly exciting announcements in Budget 2026. Much done, much more to do.

Municipal Infrastructure Projects PST Exemption Inquiry

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, this government claims to be a partner to municipalities, yet it continues to apply provincial sales tax to municipal infrastructure projects. They take money out of one pocket to help fund projects, and then they put their hand back in the other to increase the cost.

Can the minister explain why this government is refusing to exempt municipal infrastructure projects from provincial sales tax?

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): It's budget day in Manitoba so, obviously, there's a lot more people in person here. And they should know that since the AMM, I've been hanging on to this progress report for my first question on municipalities.

So here we are in March. I'd love to table this progress report from the AMM. It's full of check marks from 2004-'24-2025. And what municipalities can count on in this government is stability and predictability. We will invest in municipalities every single year. We won't dig a hole and throw a shovel. We've given them a ladder; they're working their way out of that hole with a true partner to make the big things—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Lakeside, on a supplementary question.

School Division Funding Municipal Property Taxes

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): The minister says that the municipalities can count on them, but can they count on them to exempt the PST from municipal infrastructure projects?

Honourable Speaker, municipalities are being left to take the blame for rising school taxes when the real issue is this government's failure to properly fund the

school divisions. Instead of fixing the problem, they create the shortfall and then they try to take credit for reacting to it.

So why is the Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations allowing municipalities to be the fall guy for this government's failures?

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): We're a true partner with municipalities and everybody knows this. Oh—sorry.

The Speaker: The honourable minister of municipalities and northern affairs.

Mr. Simard: Okay. My apologies, Honourable Speaker. I was so excited to share that—the fact that we are true partners with municipalities. We show up and their—we can find their offices.

You know, when I drove out to Riding Mountain West—that's in Inglis, by the way—they said, you've been here twice in one year, what's up with that? We don't even know where our MLA is. True story.

And when we continue to work with people on building the big projects across this province, whether it is NEWPCC, whether it is the water and waste water infrastructure in the Red River area, whether it's in the Pembina Valley co-op—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Simard: —whether it's in Portage, whether it's in Brandon, we are there—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

Provincial and Municipal Governments Concern for Future Relations

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, under this government, municipal relations has clearly been bungled, the key programs cut or scaled back and municipalities left with growing uncertainty.

Manitobans rely on strong local governments. Those municipalities, in turn, rely on—upon the Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations, but instead of support they are getting mismanagement and instability.

Will Manitobans be forced to endure this incompetence until 2027?

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): It's the PC comedy hour. To say that this government hasn't been working with municipalities when I just tabled a report full of check

marks of all of our accomplishments, it really makes no sense.

It's because they're trying to distract people from what's really going on here, that finally, there's a government that is listening to their partners and treating them like true partners; whether it's taking the drive to Winkler and sitting with the mayor and deputy mayor for hours, talking about what's meaningful for their communities; whether it's investing in places like Portage or Grandview. Grandview is another one there in the Parkland that—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Manitoba's Economy Growth Rate and Taxes

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Before this government stands up and asks Manitobans to believe in their next budget, I think it's important that we look at their record.

Since taking office, Manitoba has had the slowest economic growth in the entire country: only 1.1 per cent growth. And at that same time, exports are down, investment is leaving and good-paying jobs are disappearing. This, all while the Premier is taking credit for sprinkling pennies across the province.

So, Honourable Speaker, after years of promises and sprinkling of pennies, why has this NDP government delivered one of the weakest economies in our entire country?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Honourable Speaker, I'm happy to talk about our record where we've added nearly 30,000 net-new jobs, good-paying jobs, into our economy over the last two years. And on top of that, when I talk to people in the trades and the construction sector, they're looking for more workers.

* (14:30)

I'm happy to say over the last two years, we've increased the amount of trained apprentices by 25 per cent. That's a 25 per cent increase over the former failed PC government. That means more skilled workers are going into our economy, boosting jobs and growing our economy in a real way.

What was their record? Well, they closed mass offices. They thanked Donald Trump for bringing in his tariffs. They did nothing to help our economy during a troubling time.

Instead, we're here working with Manitobans and growing our economy—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Narth: Honourable Speaker, again, here's the reality before today's budget is even tabled: record spending, record debt and nothing to show for it but higher costs and slower growth.

Honourable Speaker, instead of letting Manitobans keep more of their money, like raising the personal tax exemption, this government continues to tax and spend, and families continue to feel that they're falling further behind.

Before this budget is tabled, Honourable Speaker, will the Premier admit that their tax-and-spend approach has failed Manitobans, and commit to changing course before it's too late today?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Page 144 in this year's budget. Look it up, everybody. Taxes going down.

We're cutting taxes. We cut the gas tax, we cut your property taxes and, today, we're cutting the sales tax off of everything in the grocery store. A year ago on budget day, we were worried about the Trump tariffs and the impact that it was going to have on the economy. I'm so proud of Manitobans for stepping up and continuing to build our province.

And what did they do in the face of the Trump tariffs? Their leader said, and I quote: I would thank him. Didn't just say it once; he said it a second time on the same podcast: I would thank Donald Trump, talking about the tariffs. Completely the wrong approach.

The Minister of Finance is about to table an important document that will show what? We have the best situation when it comes to fiscal, the lowest deficit in all of Canada. Props to him for doing—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The time for questions has also expired.

Petitions? Seeing no petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass members for leave for a 10-minute recess with a—one minute of bells for the last minute to switch the guests in the gallery for the budget procedure to commence.

The Speaker: Is there leave for the leave request as requested by the honourable Government House Leader? *[Agreed]*

The House is now recessed for 10 minutes.

The House recessed at 2:33 p.m.

The House resumed at 2:43 p.m.

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

We are now resuming orders of the day, government business.

BUDGET ADDRESS

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the First Minister, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker: Been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable First Minister, that the House approves the general budgetary policy of the government. *[interjection]*

It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable First Minister, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, before I share details of this year's budget, I want to take a moment to pay tribute to a member of the Legislative Assembly we lost too soon.

Amanda Lathlin served the people of The Pas-Kameesak since she was elected in 2015. She made history as the first First Nations woman elected to the Legislature, paving the way for many who sit here today.

In this Chamber, she was a strong voice for northern Manitoba. She passed important legislation to bring stronger services for sexual assault survivors in the North and to ensure women in Manitoba could take paid, compassionate leave for a miscarriage. She spoke the Cree language proudly into the recorded history of our province.

As a member of our government, Amanda helped secure investments for The Pas and surrounding communities that continue in this year's budget: expanded training programs for paramedics and health-care aides at University College of the North; over \$18 million in the First Nations delivery of Child and Family Services; millions in funding for family camps at Grand Rapids and youth programs at The Pas Family Resource Centre; a \$4.6-million investment in The Pas

correction centre healing lodge; investments into better ambulance services in the Fisher River Cree Nation; and over \$2 million for a new bachelor of Indigenous language program at UCN.

Honourable Speaker, I have the privilege today of announcing that Amanda's legacy will live on in a new health-care clinic for The Pas opening in 2030.

Amanda was funny, compassionate and tough. She would tell you like it is and love you as you are. I invite all members of this Chamber and guests in the gallery to join me in honouring her with a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

MLA Sala: Amanda Lathlin, a loving mother and grandmother to her girls, a fierce advocate for the North and a trailblazer in our province. May she rest in peace.

Thank you to everyone who has joined us here today for our government's third budget.

French spoken

C'est avec beaucoup d'humilité que nous vous accueillons à l'Assemblée législative et que nous nous engageons sur une voie positive pour le Manitoba, ensemble.

Translation

It is with great humility that we welcome you to the Legislative Assembly and commit to working together on a positive path forward for Manitoba.

English

On behalf of the Manitoba government, we honour the sacredness and importance of this land and of the ancestors that once walked where we're standing today: the Anishinewuk, the Cree, the Dene, the Dakota, the Métis, the Inuit and the Anishinaabe nations who paved the way to what is now known as Manitoba, home to all treaty people.

Honourable Speaker, I present this budget at a moment of great economic opportunity. Canada is looking to the Port of Churchill as an answer to the questions we face in this new world order. It's an answer that's been here all along, a trade route known to the Dene, Cree and Inuit people for centuries. We are, after all, a maritime province with the Port of Churchill as our gateway to the Arctic and to the rest of the world.

At the same time, on the cusp of such great opportunity for tomorrow, families face very real challenges today. Month after month, across the country, rising costs make it harder for the middle class to keep their heads above water. And for families living paycheque to paycheque, the fear of being under water is constant.

* (14:50)

The budget I'm delivering today has immediate relief to address those rising costs with help for your mortgage payments, your rent and help where it hurts the most: at the grocery store.

And I'm very proud to say that this budget helps those who need it most with progressive policies that support low-income Manitobans and help lift families out of poverty. And we're doing more for the middle class to lower your everyday costs on things like housing, gas and groceries.

Honourable Speaker, as deficits grow across the country, we are budgeting responsibly with the lowest deficit to GDP anywhere in Canada. We are making steady progress on our path to balance, at the end of our first term, while we deliver on what matters most to Manitobans: good jobs, lower costs and better health care.

As we return to fiscal balance, our government is committed to being transparent with Manitobans. For the first time since 2017, our public accounts received a clean audit opinion, but there's more work to do. As part of Budget 2026, we will be reviewing and updating the reporting organizations included in the government reporting entity and getting ahead of forthcoming changes to accounting standards. Our commitment to you, the great people of Manitoba, is a clean set of books, a balanced budget and a government you can trust.

Honourable Speaker, while some things have changed since I delivered our government's first budget, one thing never will, and that's our commitment to rebuilding health care so it's there when you need it. There is no quick fix for seven years of cuts, but it's important to acknowledge just how far we've come.

In the last two and a half years, we've hired 4,054 net-new health-care staff, we've added 384 fully staffed beds in our hospitals and we've opened 145 beds for seniors in personal-care homes with more hours of direct care. With 317 net-new doctors, we've gone from the worst to the best in Canada when it comes to access to a family doctor, and we lead the country in access to same-day care.

By the way, Honourable Speaker, 90 of those new doctors are practising in rural and northern Manitoba.

We've made it easier to see a doctor right away with same-day online booking at medinav.ca, two new minor injury and illness clinics in Winnipeg and Brandon and extended hours at primary-care clinics in four Winnipeg hospitals. Rebuilding health care is what Manitobans elected us to do. But the work isn't done, and we won't take our foot off the gas.

Budget 2026 presses forward to lower ER wait times by taking two important steps. First, we are creating new zones adjacent to emergency rooms, where patients with unique needs can be seen by specialists right away, immediately reducing the number of people waiting to see a doctor in an ER. Second, we're adding beds in transitional-care settings for patients who still need health care but are ready to leave the hospital, freeing up space in our hospitals for higher acuity patients who can now move through our ERs and into a bed faster.

We're starting with a cardiac-care zone at St. Boniface Hospital, mental-health-care zones at HSC and St. Boniface and 32 new transitional beds at Siloam Mission. Two and a half years ago, we promised Manitobans that we would reopen ERs closed by the previous government, and today, new emergency rooms at the Victoria hospital and the Eriksdale hospital are under construction.

Honourable Speaker, we recognize that investing in seniors care is a key component to lowering ER waits over the long term. The previous government set us back, but we're moving forward with construction under way at the Lac du Bonnet Personal Care Home. Construction on new personal-care homes in Transcona and the town of Arborg start this year.

Our fourth personal-care home will be in Bridgwater with community consultations beginning this spring. That's right, they built none in seven years; we'll build one for every year we're in government and we'll keep that commitment going.

The previous government dismantled the Cardiac Centre of Excellence at the St. Boniface Hospital, and now we're rebuilding it with a new \$22.1-million investment. Heart care Manitoba will include a centralized care clinic, 18 more beds and a cardiologist in the ER to immediately assess patients experiencing chest pain.

We completed a record number of hip and knee surgeries at the Selkirk hospital last year and now we are adding 200 more. We're improving health-care

services for families in rural and northern communities with a new paramedic pathway and more funding to recruit doctors.

Honourable Speaker, around the world, women's health care is underfunded and under attack. For years, Manitoba was no different. We're changing that. Because women should not have to pay more to access fundamental health care. They should not have to shout to be heard. They should not have to put up with a government that would close the Mature Women's Centre.

Honourable Speaker, we're opening a new menopause clinic in south Winnipeg. We've hired more lactation consultants and more midwives to help new moms. We're saving women money every month with free birth control and free HRT. And we're making free menstrual products mandatory in workplaces.

We are investing in women's heart health and ovarian cancer research and we lowered the age for breast cancer screening. And we will always defend a woman's right to choose and protect safe access to abortion. Honourable Speaker, this is the Manitoba I'm proud to raise my daughters in.

As we make these new investments, we continue to listen to health-care staff and the health-care unions who represent them. You show up to the front lines every day to face our society's greatest challenges: poverty, addiction, mental health and homelessness. And we recognize that even as we make positive changes together, change isn't easy and it takes time. We promise to listen, to work with you and to keep you safe with permanent funding for institutional safety officers and other important security measures. These changes aren't going anywhere.

It's some of those challenges we face that are at the heart of making health care better for all of us. We want all Manitobans to be safe and healthy and that starts with housing. Honourable Speaker, this budget has funds to build another 215 social and affordable housing units and provide wrap-around supports like mental health and addictions treatment to Manitobans moving from tents to supportive housing.

Ending chronic homelessness is the right thing to do and it's an investment that will make our health-care system stronger as more Manitobans find a path to stable, healthy lives. The job of fixing health care is far from over, but Manitobans elected our team because we have the compassion and the determination to see it through.

Honourable Speaker, ask any Manitoban where they're feeling squeezed by high costs the most and they'll tell you: It's at the grocery store. Families are choosing to buy less fresh fruit and vegetables. They're clipping coupons, comparison shopping and passing on the name brands they used to like better. They're doing all they can but still falling behind, all while big grocery companies make record profits.

So what can little Manitoba do in the face of rising prices across the country and big chains that are determined to drive down competition and raise your prices? Well, I'm here today to tell you that we're prepared to go further than any province has gone and use every tool available to get your grocery prices down.

Honourable Speaker, we're going after the big grocery chains with everything we've got. We're cracking down on the property controls that grocery companies use to freeze out competition so they can charge you more. We've already gotten rid of some and we're going to fight every single one that's left.

* (15:00)

We're going after predatory pricing with new legislation that makes it illegal for big companies to use your private data to charge you more, and we're moving forward with our first-in-Canada grocery study to find more ways to fight back against these shady and exploitative practices.

What else can we do to help you at the grocery store? We can step in as your government to directly lower your costs. It started when we froze the price of milk, and our next important step is to take the PST off of all food at the grocery store. From the rotisserie chicken at Costco to salads in the deli section at your local Co-op, starting July 1, there will be no PST on any food sold in a grocery store here in Manitoba.

We're stepping up with more relief for housing costs too. For homeowners, we're increasing the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit to \$1,700 and asking the 1 per cent who have been given so much by our province to give back a little bit more.

We're increasing support for renters too, by increasing the Renters Affordability Tax Credit to \$675, and helping seniors with an increased top-up to make it easier to feel secure on a fixed income. We're also looking at ways to 'gent' you rent relief sooner, so you don't have to wait until tax time.

For farmers and producers, we're saving you money yet again with a freeze on Crown land leases for the third year in a row.

And, Honourable Speaker, we are making transit free for kids and youth, saving families money and helping us on our Path to Net Zero.

And when it comes to families with the lowest incomes, we're doing what no government has ever done before: we're making child care free in Manitoba for parents who need the most help.

But that's not all. As Dr. Jim Silver will tell you, adult education is one of the most impactful ways to grow our economy and end poverty, so we are increasing funding for adult literacy programs by 2 and a half million dollars to help more Manitobans graduate and find a good job.

And, Honourable Speaker, we're keeping costs low for municipalities so they can keep costs low for you, with the third stable and predictable funding increase in a row. That means more for policing, including 12 more officers, and new public safety grants for communities and BIZ associations across the province.

We're investing more in staff and emergency management systems to protect communities from wildfires, including a \$75-million investment in a state-of-the-art fire base in the Thompson area.

From the Northgate Trails in the Parkland region to free swimming lessons and a new track in The Pas; from waste water projects in the Pembina Valley to funding for the fabulous art centre in Flin Flon; from the expansion of the Gaynor library in Selkirk—one of the busiest libraries in the province—to more sports and programs for kids in Steinbach, we're proud to be investing in communities across the province.

Honourable Speaker, Manitoba's economy is strong. Wages are outpacing inflation and that means more money in your pocket.

The private sector continues to grow because we're setting the right conditions to do business. That means more jobs for Manitobans across the province. That's right; our record capital investment is spurring projects across the province, and our Manitoba jobs agreement will be built into the framework for every major project to ensure they're being built with good Manitoba jobs.

Honourable Speaker, that's how we built the flood-way and that's how we built Manitoba Hydro. And that's how we'll keep building the schools, hospitals,

roads and highways that we need to grow: starting the design work for the Carberry overpass, twinning Highway 1, repaving Highway 2, just to name a few.

We're putting skilled tradespeople to work and we're helping parents return to work, building 21 new child-care centres that will open over the next year. That's thousands of new spaces for families in West Kildonan, St. Boniface, River Heights, Burrows, Brandon, Portage la Prairie and many other neighbourhoods across the province.

And unlike the previous government who never planned for new schools at all, we're planning smart, adding more capacity to keep up as our communities grow. And we're building these schools with playgrounds because that's what Manitoba families should expect from their government. And from now on, they can.

We're growing the critical mineral sector in Manitoba, creating good jobs and more opportunities for trade. We supported the first First Nations owned mine in our province and we protected hundreds of mining jobs in Thompson.

Honourable Speaker, I want to return to that great economic opportunity I spoke about at the start: Churchill. Along the Hudson's Bay, under the beautiful northern lights, home to polar bears and beluga whales, this is our home. This is our moment to create jobs for generations, to put Manitoba on the map, to finally become a have province.

Working with the Prime Minister and in true partnership with Indigenous Nations, we are advancing a major Manitoba project. Honourable Speaker, this new trade corridor will reach Europe and India faster than the Port of Vancouver. We're building it with the Arctic Gateway Group and a new \$10-million fund to unlock private sector investment. We're building it with the latest research on sea ice and icebreakers. Not only is a year-round port possible, Honourable Speaker, our government will get it built.

And, Honourable Speaker, we'll do it right. We'll protect our water and our marine life, working in partnership with Indigenous nations and the Town of Churchill, with support from environmental leaders like Oceans North and CPAWS. We'll support the thriving tourism industry in Churchill that draws thousands of visitors from all over the world to see what's so special about this place.

And to the people of Churchill: We'll protect your way of life, your family and your community.

Honourable Speaker, despite the challenges we face, we are still hopeful about our future here in Manitoba. And we have every reason to be.

French spoken

Sous notre gouvernement, nous serons à la hauteur des exigences d'une province véritablement bilingue. Le Secrétariat aux affaires francophones continue de travailler en étroite collaboration avec les entités publiques et les collectivités francophones, en mobilisant plus de trois millions de dollars de financement fédéral afin de renforcer les capacités en matière de bilinguisme et d'accroître l'offre de services gouvernementaux en français dans toute la province. Nous soutenons d'importants partenariats avec le ministère de la Justice du Manitoba, la Société Voyage Manitoba et l'Association des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba. Et nous sommes à l'écoute du nouveau Groupe de travail de l'Hôpital Sainte-Anne pour répondre aux besoins des collectivités francophones dans le sud-est du Manitoba.

Translation

Under our government we will live up to what it means to be a truly bilingual province. The Francophone Affairs Secretariat continues to work hand-in-hand with public bodies and francophone communities, leveraging over \$3 million in federal funding to build bilingual capacity and increase government services in French across the province. We are supporting important partnerships with Manitoba Justice, Travel Manitoba and the Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities. And we are listening to the new Ste. Anne Hospital working group to meet the needs of francophone communities in southeastern Manitoba.

English

The changes we need in health care are under way with more staff to see them through. The relief you need from high costs is on the way. The good jobs and opportunities we want for ourselves and our kids are here. Looking across the country, there's no place I'd rather be today than Manitoba. There's more work to do, but we'll get it done.

So let's keep working together because you can count on us to deliver on what matters to you and your family: good jobs, lower costs and better health care.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

* (15:10)

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): I move, seconded by the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone), that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Messages

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I have a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, as well as the budget documents, which I would like to table.

The Speaker: Order, please.

To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Lieutenant—everybody rise, please.

To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Lieutenant Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of sums required for the services of the province for the fiscal year ending

the 31st day of March 2027, and recommends these Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

Be seated.

* * *

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Government House Leader, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance, that this House do now adjourn.

As such, this House is—*[interjection]*

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

This House, then, is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

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