



Second 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
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JACKSON, Grant	Spruce Woods	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie, 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>	Transcona	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

The House met at 10 a.m.

The Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, 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; that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Please be seated.

Private members' business—

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MLA David Pankratz (Deputy Government House Leader): Would you please call to debates on second reading of Bill 208, the Manitoba small business act.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 208—The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will now debate second reading, Bill 208, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): I move, seconded by the MLA for Elmwood, that Bill 208, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Cross: I rise today to present Bill 208, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act. This bill recognizes the month of May as a time to celebrate and uplift our small businesses here in Manitoba. It's a reminder of the importance of supporting our local businesses, especially now as we face both opportunities and challenges in a changing political and economic climate.

While the tariffs that we are recently seeing being imposed and then not imposed on our country, it's creating uncertainty for our citizens; it's creating uncertainty for our businesses. People feel anxious. The resilience and strength of our small businesses in this province are more essential than ever, and we must take actions to support them and ensure that they have the tools they need to navigate the upcoming challenges.

This bill does just that. It recognizes the incredible economic and cultural contributions these businesses have made to our province. It also serves to educate and spread awareness of the many benefits of shopping locally and actions that strengthen our communities and ensures that our province remains economically robust in these uncertain times.

Small businesses make up 95 per cent of our business sector here in Manitoba. We have over 40,000 small businesses. While they span across various industries, from agricultural to retail, tourism, insurance, real estate, they all have one thing in common: They are run by Manitobans for Manitobans, and they need our support.

These businesses are community members who care about your local neighbourhoods as much as we all do. They have the same concerns, the same interests and want to see our local communities thrive. They are the heart of our province. They create jobs, support our producers and reinvest in our collective future, strengthening our foundations.

We know that Manitobans want to use their money ethically, and supporting local businesses is the best way to do that. Not only can we rest easy knowing how products are made and who is profiting from them, but supporting small businesses means reinvesting in our communities. And at a time when we face pressures from trade disruptions and uncertainty, strengthening our local businesses is even more urgent.

As we face uncertain times in the next few months, or possibly the next four years, it's now more important than ever that we support the foundations of our Manitoba economy, strengthening our province to weather the upcoming storm. This bill is more important than ever, and it requires support from everybody in this Chamber.

For each dollar spent at a small retail business here in Manitoba, 66 cents stays in our province. Two thirds of that dollar will be recirculated right here at home, benefiting all Manitobans. In comparison, each dollar spent in an online giant will only keep 8 cents in our local economy. That means buying local reinvests eight times the amount of money back into Manitoba's future.

But the contributions of small businesses in this province can't be summed up with just numbers. Small businesses are part of the rich soil that feeds Manitoba's cultural garden. Coffee shops give us places to meet with old friends and hear local bands. Talented artisans from diverse backgrounds share their culture with us through art and food. Young entrepreneurs give us hope about our province's futures. These businesses enrich our lives in so many ways that large corporations simply cannot.

Small businesses are dedicated to giving back to their communities. They sponsor community events and sports teams, taking a leading role in community affairs and make charitable contributions of time and money to local organizations. Think of, for example, a locally owned restaurant. That restaurant will not only provide delicious warm meals and a community space for gathering, but provide employment to community members. They buy—if they buy their ingredients and décor from other local retailers, host fundraisers for local charities, the employees who work at that restaurant will spend their wages at the local grocer, the local florist, and on and on.

That money stays in circulation within the community, and just like that, one locally owned restaurant can have an incredibly positive impact on so many people. We're all trying to make better, more

conscious use of our dollars, and by shifting our spending towards small businesses, we can make sure that our money contributes to a more robust, economic backbone and a more vibrant soul for our province.

Now, small business is really close to my heart, literally. My office is located at the St. Norbert Community Centre, right next to the St. Norbert Farmers' Market, where local vendors operate and where I buy the best tomatoes I have ever had that have been grown in Dauphin.

* (10:10)

I've seen first-hand how small businesses make a difference. Members of my community and my own family are small business owners, and every day I see the good that they do, the investments they make, both financially and culturally into the community. They inspire me to stand here before you today to introduce this bill. They show me how small businesses play a critical role in fostering inclusive economic growth. Small businesses offer opportunity for empowerment.

In Manitoba, 12 per cent of our small businesses are owned by women, a number that really does need to increase. We have programs targeted towards Indigenous youth, gender-diverse people and more to inspire and support their entrepreneurial spirits. Supporting small businesses means supporting Manitoba and supporting the vibrant diversity of our province. When we uplift our small businesses, we uplift all of our diverse and vibrant communities.

Small businesses, they're the cultural heartbeat of our neighborhoods. Like all of us, when I think of Manitoba, what makes me proud to live here isn't the local Walmart or the local McDonald's. If someone asks me for a recommendation on where to shop or where to eat, it's small businesses that come to mind first. They're representations of Manitoba and I'm proud to support them. When we support small businesses, we're supporting each other.

These small businesses will be able to utilize the small business month act as a way of marketing and promoting themselves, helping bring in more customers and more revenue and bring more eyes onto the local biz networks and groups that we have here in our province.

Despite the pause on tariffs—the potential pause—small businesses still face so many challenges. The competition from multinational companies are fierce. And many small businesses continue to struggle with the financial impacts of the pandemic and rising costs.

I know for our own personal small business, we own a butcher shop. My husband and my daughter run it day-to-day, and I know in the last six months we were just starting to see levels of support coming back to what it was prior to the pandemic.

Business support programs that were underfunded by the previous government, some progress has been made there, but there's still more to do and this is a chance for all of us to get together and do the right thing for these small businesses. We must work together across political lines to support them now, more than ever. We need to be uplifting and recognizing the struggle that small businesses face and encourage all Manitobans to support them. And we can do that starting right here.

We want to show all Manitobans that small businesses are important to us. We recognize the challenges they face, the incredibly important role they fulfill in our communities. And we're so appreciative of their resiliency.

Manitobans, we need to get out into our local communities, connect with the local small businesses and support them. This May, regardless if this bill goes through or not, I'm going to encourage small businesses on social media to take a look at local bulletins. I'm going to spread the word about restaurants in my community or other local vendors. Why not try out a new restaurant, look for a locally sourced product at the grocery store, check out the local farmers' markets. You can't get more local than a farmers' market.

By supporting our small businesses and helping them grow, we keep competition alive in our local economies, making life more affordable for Manitobans and making it easier for all of us to buy local in the future. Manitoba is home to so many amazing small businesses who are much more than just economic entities. They're integral to our province. And by recognizing May as Manitoba small business month, we can put the spotlight on local businesses and encourage everyone to help them thrive.

I strongly encourage my colleagues in this Chamber to support this bill, supporting local Manitoba businesses is not a party issue, it's a Manitoba issue. Supporting our local businesses is something that should unite us all, regardless of affiliation. We all want a stronger and more resilient Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MLA David Pankratz (Deputy Government House Leader): On House business.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Waverley, on House business.

MLA Pankratz: Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House for leave to debate the private member's resolution, Encouraging Manitobans to Support Local, sponsored by the member for Seine River during private members' business on Tuesday, March 11.

The Speaker: Is there leave to debate the private member's resolution, Encouraging Manitobans to Support Local, sponsored by the member for Seine River during private members' business on Tuesday, March 11?

Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Questions

The Speaker: At this point of time, then, the question period of up to 10 minutes will be held—[*interjection*]

Order, please.

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I thank the member opposite for bringing this forward, but I do have a question.

What benefits and support will small business month provide Manitoba businesses, and how will these benefits and supports be implemented?

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): Thank you for the question.

As you know, when we bring private member bills forward, they do not come with dollar values attached. So what I can share is that I spent a lot of time doing—[*interjection*] Sorry, people are hollering while I'm trying to answer.

What I can share is that I spent time doing consultation, not just with businesses but with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, chambers of

commerce across the province. And what they shared with me—in fact, they were the ones that encouraged me to choose the month of May. And for—the reason for that is because Manitoba Day is in May. And what they said they would like to see is this bill pass so that they can create a calendar promoting small businesses through the month of May—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): The small business community here in Manitoba is so diverse and resilient and they work hard for Manitobans. The range of services can vary from ag to retail sector, and they employ so many people in our province.

My question to my colleague is: What are some of the ways that small businesses contribute to our great province?

MLA Cross: Thank you for that question.

There are so many contributions that Manitoba small businesses make. They represent over 95 per cent of all businesses in our province. They provide quality service. They provide jobs. In fact, when you think about small businesses, often they employ the teenagers in the neighbourhood, the women in the neighbourhood that maybe only want to work part-time because they still want to be able to pick their kids up after school.

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy because of their flexibility, because of the dollars that are kept in our province. It's my hope that the passage of this bill will celebrate these businesses for all of these reasons.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Thank you for the member for bringing up Bill 208 today. It brings me great pleasure to ask the questions, as a business owner myself.

But how does the bill address the specific challenges small businesses are facing today?

MLA Cross: I think one of the biggest challenges small businesses face is competition with our large corporations. They don't have the same buying power. Therefore, I think this bill brings forward an opportunity for increased supports in terms of campaigns, in terms of advertising, in terms of people becoming—it becoming a habit that, in May, we support local businesses.

I can foresee people going: you know what, I'm not going to shop at those big stores for this whole month. I'm going to shop at my local butcher shop, my

local bakery, my local farmers' market for my produce. I am going to check out who owns the different businesses in my neighbourhood. Are they owned by bigger corporations? Are they owned by private citizens?

I think the biggest thing we can do is just support local—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

MLA Pankratz: You know, as we've been saying, small businesses are just so important for our communities here in Manitoba. And, you know, they provide quality services. They create jobs. They foster a sense of local identity, and Bill 208 aims to celebrate small businesses and highlight their importance to Manitoba's economy.

So my question for my colleague is: What was her inspiration behind the bill?

MLA Cross: I think the biggest inspiration is coming from a family of business owners. I grew up in a home where my father was a tradesperson, but he owned his own business. And so I saw the challenges that brought; I saw the hard work that was put in to keep that business going, to make sure that it was successful.

* (10:20)

My father wasn't just the bricklayer on the site; he was the labourer, he was the cleanup crew, he was the bookkeeper, he was the person going out doing estimates, so he was the salesperson. My husband owns a butcher shop. I ran a sports apparel company.

As a Métis person, the Métis people were known entrepreneurs, and I think it's just, you know, something that's ingrained in me that we should have that spirit and encourage people that also want to pursue that type of lifestyle—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): My question for the member—again, thank you for bringing this bill forward. Also a small business owner as well, myself.

The question I have is, about six months into their mandate, the NDP's mandate, they cancelled the—sales tax commission was eliminated for small business owners. So I know it came up with a small business owner that has a chair that cuts hair every day, single mom, and she says, you know what, this is an administrative burden for me already, and now the NDP have gone ahead and cut any kind of support on my 'reumittance'.

Can the member tell us, or tell Manitobans, why they cut that support?

MLA Cross: I guess I'll start by saying that, you know, paying taxes is something that we all do as citizens; it's part of our democracy. Collecting sales tax and passing it onto the province, we're not putting a burden on that business owner. These are not their own dollars; these are dollars that are coming in from the people purchasing.

You know, members opposite, they always want to talk about tax cuts, but they don't want to talk about the importance of having taxes and what that does for a civilized society. The importance of tax is to pay for our roads, that pay for our infrastructure, that pay for us to sit in this Chamber and run a democracy.

Members opposite can criticize my bill all they want. The simple question is: do they support small business or not? And it doesn't sound like they're in support.

MLA Pankratz: Our NDP team is very thankful for the contributions of small businesses. They employ so many Manitobans with great jobs, and they keep our hard-earned dollars here in Manitoba.

I would just like to—and this makes a large impact that deserves to be recognized.

And my question for my colleague is: You know, what initiatives or activities do you envision will take place during small business month?

MLA Cross: Thank you for that question. In some of my many conversations with Chuck Davidson at the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, one of the biggest things that he talked about that he had been kind of working with other chambers of commerce on was this month having a calendar, whether it be a certain day supports a certain type of business owner, or a certain type of business in the sector, and really promoting that; ad campaigns that can come off of this month and this recognition.

The fact that all of the members in this House, when this bill passes, they will fully be in support of it, because they're going to promote small business month in May for the businesses in their own constituencies. The No. 1 thing small businesses need from us is our support, and I think that's what this shows, and I think that's what—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Being a small business owner in the past myself, it—we know

that women specifically have a harder time starting businesses because of how we're engineered and how we think. Women tend to be less risk takers; they tend to think things through differently.

So what—my question would be, what is the small business week going to do to encourage helping—specifically helping women get involved in small business themselves?

MLA Cross: You know, I'm going to use my teacher brain for a moment and talk about raising awareness. Teaching people about what it means to support local, and understanding that only 12 per cent of small businesses in Manitoba are owned by women.

My hope is that when they see a small business month, women will take that chance, they will reach out for supports, there are supports out there. The women's enterprise network, SEED Winnipeg, there are programs to help women start their businesses.

But the other thing that I would like to see is that the norms change, our thinkings change. Business isn't just for men. Business is for everyone. Women belong in everything in our society. We are leaders, we are natural leaders. We do it in our homes, we do it in our jobs, we do it in our communities—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Pankratz: I'm hoping that today, the opposition, with all their support they're showing so far, will not speak this bill out.

Manitoba has over 40,000 small businesses contributing to various sectors and communities. As they give back to their neighbourhood, they can count on their government to give back to them and recognize their contributions.

My question for my colleague is: How will Bill 208 positively impact the small business community here in Manitoba?

MLA Cross: I think it'll be a really positive impact. I think they'll feel appreciated, they'll feel respected and they're going to have a whole month dedicated to them. A month where people are talking about the importance of small businesses while supporting local.

And when I say small businesses, I do understand that there are lots of Manitoba businesses that are larger. I want to make sure that we're supporting all Manitoba businesses right now, more than ever. We need to keep as many—as much of those dollars in our

province as we can. We cannot continue supporting large corporations.

I certainly hope everyone will support this bill today.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

And I would just remind all members during debate to keep their comments relevant to the bill we're discussing.

Floor is open.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Having the opportunity to stand up in the Chamber today and speak about Manitoba small business is an honour. I've been involved in small business my entire life.

As I mentioned in this Chamber before, my first business I started, I was 16 years old, still in high school, and I started a company that applied fertilizer and treatment for weeds called Lawn Boy Services. Eventually, I employed four people. We had two trucks and a trailer, and I worked evenings and weekends.

It was a difficult process to start. As a small business owner, especially at that time, I wasn't legally an adult, so I had to bring on a partner. So at 16 years old, I had brought a partner on for names' sake and went to the bank and I asked for money and they said nope. No, you don't—your plan is a good plan; however, we don't feel it viable, but thank you for coming. Give it two years. Come back here when you turn 18 and show us your books.

My quick thought pattern was, well, in—hopefully in two years, I don't need the bank. So I strung together what I could, I made agreements with many people in my community, I talked to suppliers, and they seen the potential in me. And because of those other small businesses that supported me, I was able to get the trucks, the equipment, the fertilizer, the herbicides that I can—to do my business.

I was also—found out about red tape, regulation, what it took. I had my idea, I had my equipment, I'm ready to go and red tape hits you in the face. And small business has this all the time, so we need to support small business.

And I went out there and found out that I need to be a licensed applicator for these treatments out there.

You have to go out there and you have to measure wind speed and mark down the amount of application you have and the area you're covered and the day and the temperature and all this. And looking back now, that was very important to know that, to make sure that you're not contaminating other yards or waterways or other words.

But it was an introduction into red tape. And that red tape continued on, and it still continues today.

Small business is facing—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Perchotte: —challenges every day that we need to recognize. And as government, we have the opportunity to reduce that red tape. We keep moving forward.

And as that small business owner, and other members of my community supporting me, I was able to take that little, tiny business and grow it. And over four years, I sold it for a nice profit, and I went on to another business. And that—there's aspects of that business that are still around today under a different name.

So it's very fulsome to find out that, when you go out there and you invest your time, your energy and efforts and move forward, and without the help of the banks or without the help of the government, I was able to succeed. And—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

* (10:30)

I find it difficult to hear what the actual speaker is saying when members in their chairs are hollering back and forth across the aisle, so I'd ask you to please contain yourselves while a member has the floor.

Mr. Perchotte: I appreciate your comments on that. It is very difficult to speak in this Chamber at the best of times, with people behaving poorly.

So as a small business owner and in that community, you start to come together to recognize other business owners and their struggles. And unfortunately, there is no—at that time, we're talking many, many years ago, almost 40 years ago, when I started my first business—there was no association or group to help small companies start off. There was no mentorship to happen from people who'd been there before.

Things have changed. Things have changed along the way. About a week ago, I was off to a breakfast

meeting from North Forge who helps companies start up and move forward. They also help them protect their intellectual property. They have great things. So when business comes together, small business actually comes together to support each other, they can do some tremendous things, moving forward.

When you take a look at the small businesses we have, they often complement the large industries. In Selkirk alone, we have a steel mill. And I know I spoke in this Chamber—and unfortunately, the minister cannot name the steel mill, but it's Gerdau steel mill.

Gerdau steel mill is a fairly large company. But the small businesses that support that company are largely, locally, in my community. So, even though that the large steel mill employs around 400 to 500 people, there's another 300 directly related small business operators and employees, directly related to that company. We have a steel mill that is facing, now, a 50 per cent tariff.

Now, the steel mill has a specialty product. Very few in North America make that. But it's the small businesses that are going to get hurt when that tariff comes into play; the small businesses that do the transportation, that do the snow clearing, that do the supplying of safety equipment, whether it's safety glasses, proper PPE, protective—personal protective equipment—or the machine shops, or the tool and die suppliers, or all the related industries that depend on the work of that steel mill and the small businesses that support it: the restaurants, as the member opposite mentioned. Those industries will be directly impacted by any loss of sales.

We need to find a way to support small business and not just support them by saying: here's a month; have fun with it. We need to actually have something substantial that we can move forward and say, During small business month, we want to show you that you matter. We're going to have a reduction in red tape; we're going to have an advertising campaign that has made local, made in Manitoba, that we support that. We want to make sure that businesses have an opportunity to come forward and showcase their products, to showcase what they have the ability to do here.

Every single person that is employed in a small business—and over the years, I have personally hired over 500 people to work in the companies that I've had—every single person becomes a part of a family. It's the employees of that company that are the value of the company. The owners could have an idea and they put up the funding capital and they work hard

and they spend countless hours, on weekends. But it's the employees that help make that vision possible. And when you treat your employees well, they stay with you for a long time.

The burden that happens for the owners—as I mentioned, as a young entrepreneur starting off, there was no assistance. The rules at the banks, the regulations out there are very, very difficult. Many, many small business owners put their houses up as collateral against the loans. They wage everything they have to—on their future. They tell everybody: I am all in. We need to recognize that. That's having skin in the game, and when you have skin in the game, you work so much harder than you can imagine. You give up time from family, from friends. That's time you won't get back. And hopefully you're doing it for the right reasons, for a betterment of your family, betterment for the future.

It is the hard-working men and women every day who go into their establishments that they've created, to have a little niche market somewhere and to carve out a little bit of identity that has the ability to say, yes, we are proud. We are proud Canadians, we are proud Manitobans and we are proud to be business owners. And if you could hold your head up high, you're doing something right.

When you have an opportunity, when you leave here today, thank a small business owner.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there no further—the honourable member for La Vérendrye.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): It brings me great pleasure today to talk about something that is truly the backbone of our economy: small businesses. Whether it's your favourite local coffee shop, the family-run hardware store down the street or the tech start-up making waves right here in Winnipeg, small businesses are essential to Manitoba's economic health.

Did you know that small businesses make up 98 per cent of all businesses in Manitoba? That means that nearly every business you see around you is classified as small, employing fewer than 100 people. But their impact is anything but small. They create jobs, drive innovation, contribute to economic growth and shape the communities that we live in today.

Small businesses and the recognition of small businesses is something that is near and dear to me. I've grown up in small business my entire life, come

from a family of small business owners for generations back, as far as our family history can see. From around the world, on one side of my family, as far back as history goes, we were small business owners in Germany. On the other side of my family, my mother's side, small business owners and farmers in the Ukraine.

Both sides came to Canada, came to Manitoba to bring that entrepreneurial skill to make our province a better place. Small businesses create jobs. One of the biggest contributors of small businesses is creating employment. Across Manitoba, they provide nearly 90 per cent of private sector jobs. That means that you, your family or your friends, if they work in the private sector, chances are that they're working for a small business paying their salaries.

Think about the variety of industries supported by small businesses. Retail shops right here in downtown Winnipeg, farmers and agribusinesses in rural Manitoba, tech start-ups developing innovative software and construction companies building homes and offices. Every small business provides people with livelihoods and opportunities for growth. And in small towns, these businesses are often the largest employers, keeping communities alive and thriving. And that's something that I see representing La Vérendrye, a small—representing small southeast Manitoba communities.

If you look at every community centre or event, there's advertisement. These are the businesses that are advertising to keep these organizations, the community events and the people in their communities. Without these small businesses, the people wouldn't have jobs and the events wouldn't be possible.

* (10:40)

Beyond jobs, small businesses also fuel our economy in a massive way. They contribute 30 to 40 per cent of Manitoba's GDP and generate billions in annual revenue.

When you shop at a local bakery instead of a big chain, more of that money stays in Manitoba. Studies have shown that out of \$100 spent at a local business about \$68 stays in the local economy. You compare that to only \$43 when spent at a big box store.

Along with that, some economics at play, there is a multiplier effect to that dollar. So every dollar that's spent in the local economy multiplies. It doubles by the times it hits all the hands that it trades with. So at that 40 per cent difference, it's a tremendous value

that small business contributes to the local business and also to our provincial economy.

Small businesses also support each other. Local manufacturers supply materials to local stores, and local service providers work together. This inter-connection system strengthens our entire economy and reduces reliance on big, multinational corporations.

Small businesses are also drivers of innovation. Across Manitoba, entrepreneurs are finding a new way to solve problems and create unique products and services. Start-ups in Winnipeg's innovation alley are developing cutting edge technologies. Small agribusinesses are creating eco-friendly farming techniques. And Indigenous-owned businesses are bringing cultural heritage into modern marketplaces.

There are so many, so many great examples of businesses that have started in Manitoba and have now become world recognized. I'd like to share a list of those with the House today, and you, Honourable Speaker.

We all know the famous Canada Goose brand jackets. This was founded right here in Winnipeg in 1957, and now movie stars from across the world are wearing these jackets. It was originally called Metro Sportswear. This company has become a global leader in high-end winter outerwear.

SkipTheDishes—this is a more recent business that many people don't think of as a Winnipeg business. But again, this business was founded in 2012. It's a food delivery platform that was started in Manitoba and rapidly expanded across Canada.

We all know our famous Salisbury House, founded in 1931 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Another example of a Winnipeg success that's found its way across Canada and to other countries around the world.

New Flyer Industries—a Winnipeg company started in 1930, a leading manufacturer of electric and hybrid buses across North America.

A&W Canada—when we think of a worldwide multinational, A&W Canada was founded right here in Winnipeg in 1956. The first A&W restaurant in Canada opened in Winnipeg and it has grown into one of the country's largest fast food chains with over 1,000 locations.

There are so many, so many other examples that I have here today, but I'd like to touch on some of the agriculture leaders around the world. Richardson

International, founded in Winnipeg in 1857: this is one of Canada's largest agribusiness companies and a global leader in grain handling, oil seed processing and food production. It operates grain elevators, mills and processing plants, now, worldwide.

Paterson Global Foods, also founded in Winnipeg in 1908, more than 100 years ago: they also specialize in grain trading, processing and transportation.

These are just some—some—of the extensive list of businesses that started out with an idea by a local entrepreneur, right here in Manitoba.

It was because of their entrepreneurial foresight, but also the government's willingness to support those businesses, to grow within their community, to expand markets far greater than just our Manitoba economy. These businesses have become a shining example of entrepreneurship across the world, but it starts right here in Manitoba, in Winnipeg, in our small town communities. And it grows with the support of our government, us sitting here today as legislators, giving these businesses the opportunity, instead of hampering them by additional red tape regulations and taxes.

So when the member who brought this bill up had made mention of: it's the obligation of the business to contribute to the provincial sales tax, I would disagree. This is an honour that the business is providing to our province. We should be thankful that we have these businesses, the innovation, the minds of the entrepreneurs, to create that wealth.

So I am here today to support this bill and recognizing Manitoba small businesses.

Thank you.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): It's an honour for me to speak today on the small business month legislation. I have been a small business owner for many years in my constituency and in my community. And it's always been a big experience, a great experience for me to be part of my community in that way.

It's not easy being a small business owner. There's a lot—it's not for the faint of heart, and I think a lot of people think it's an easy job and we get to make our own hours, but really, we actually have to work 24-7, which I'm sure most small business owners know that. But it's a passion and it's a love, a labour of love from—for all of us. And I just want to just reiterate that it's such an important part of our community and our economy of our province.

Being a small business owner in Manitoba is both challenging and rewarding. As a province with a rich blend of agriculture, industry and vibrant communities, Manitoba offers unique opportunities to grow and connect with customers.

However, running a small business like I mentioned here means navigating unpredictable weather and challenges as a small business owner, a competitive market and the need for constant innovation and being able to change and move along with what's happening in our world around us.

One of the best parts of being a small business owner in Manitoba is the tight-knit community. People support local businesses and there's a real sense of pride in supporting entrepreneurs who contribute to the province's economy.

And one of the things I can speak to specifically for me when my—in my small business, was when we were going through COVID and I was in the hospitality business. Just, businesses would come along and deliberately make big orders for their—like, companies would make big orders for their employees specifically for—from us to help us, support us on those days where we didn't have any customers coming in the doors. That's small business. That's how we support each other.

Large businesses and small businesses work together. This is especially important in smaller towns, where personal relationships matter and word of mouth can drive success. When businesses—larger businesses support smaller businesses, it helps the community to grow together. It makes sure that we have the services that we need.

For example, one of the larger industries close to my small business placed an order because they said, we want to make sure that you stay and you weather through this hard time of COVID. And that's what it is all about; it's working together, and the support of the community in general and as a whole.

But with these opportunities also come challenges. We must continually adapt to customer-changing customer needs, managing cash flow and make—juggling marketing with day-to-day operations. At the same time, small businesses are vital to the economy of Manitoba, creating jobs and boosting local growth.

One of the big things that I want to just mention and bring forward is that, as a small business owner—and we had 18 employees, and the payroll tax was really difficult for us. So that's one thing I'd just like

to encourage the government to look at—changing that payroll tax, especially for the small businesses. It's very difficult to pay some of those fees, on top of trying to make ends meet.

* (10:50)

In the end, being a small business owner here, in Manitoba, means embracing resilience, creativity and community. It's about building something that reflects our values, serving our neighbours and making a meaningful impact on the places we call home. Many of the small businesses are the ones who support the non-profit organizations, who pour into their communities, specifically, because they have those relationships that you have when you have a small community. Or in a city in your neighbourhood, the small businesses will be the ones who will donate prizes and do things like that, to support their small business—or their community, which is very important.

As a woman in business, my two—I have a family, and we've been very 'entrepreneuriful'. We—I have two sons and they have two wives so I've got four kids. And my two kids, I actually will tell a little story about how they became entrepreneurs at age seven and nine. We had a pussy willow bush in the backyard and out—we—and what we would do is we'd cut—the boys wanted to make some extra money, so they cut down those little—and they—the pussy willows—they'd tie them in bunches and go door-to-door selling them with their wagon. And it was quite an ingenious little job for kids that age and that's where it started in our family.

Now my son, who—Taylor Schiller, who is 31 years old, owns two car washes, one in Morden and one in Portage la Prairie. Very proud of him. Works very hard. My son Colton Schiller has successfully purchased my business that I started with him, with his help. And now he's the sole owner at 27 years old. So it's very—a very proud thing for a mother to be able to instill those values and the small business values into her sons.

I also have a daughter-in-law, Madison Schiller, who owns a flower shop. She's a woman and she's very successful and it's exciting to see what she's doing. She's actually been invited to go to the Winnipeg Art Gallery to do displays and she's very successful as well. So it's very exciting for me. And so all four of my kids are doing very well, so very proud of them.

And having a small business in Manitoba is a great opportunity to celebrate and—the month of small

business month. It's a great opportunity to celebrate and support the backbone of our local economy. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. They are responsible for creating jobs, fostering innovation and contributing to the unique identity of our communities. So you'll find very—different areas of the city, different areas of province have very specific things that they offer in small businesses. So it's really great to see that.

A dedicated month to recognize their efforts can prove invaluable benefits. First, small business month helps raise awareness about significant roles small businesses play in Manitoba's economy. It shines a spotlight on the hard work and resilience of local entrepreneurs, who then operate—often operate with limited resources and face numerous challenges. This week encourages Manitobans to shop local—sorry, this month will encourage Manitobans to shop local, drive more traffic to businesses and might—that might otherwise be overlooked. It reminds consumers of a more important of—how important it is to support their neighbours and invest in the local economy.

One thing I do want to bring to our attention is encouraging women in business in Manitoba. It's really an important thing. As the member across mentioned that it's harder for women to get involved, there's not as many women involved in business. And we need to foster an environment that helps those women get involved. Encouraging women to open small businesses in Manitoba starts with creating an environment that fosters support, mentorship and access to resources. One key way to do this is by promoting networking opportunities and connecting women with successful role models who can offer guidance and encouragement. Women often face unique challenges, so having local support groups and business incubators that understand those needs is crucial.

Access to funding is another barrier. And we can work to create more initiatives that grant—provide grants or low interest loans tailored to women entrepreneurs. Additionally, offering education and training programs focused on financial literacy, marketing and business management can help women feel more confident in their entrepreneurial abilities.

Ultimately, by cultivating a culture of 'inclusivity' and empowering women with the tools, knowledge and support they need, we can help more women in Manitoba take the leap into business ownership and contribute to our economy's growth and diversity.

It's very important for us to support women in business. We need to encourage that. We need to make more programs available for them. Women have a—we have an innate mechanism or part of us that doesn't like to take chances. We like stability. We like more—we like to make sure that—we're not risk takers. And I think if we can just work through that and just work around that, we can really do some amazing, strong things for women in business.

And I just want to say again that small businesses are the backbone of our province, and I'm very proud to stand up today to encourage and support small business month in our province of Manitoba.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): Again, it gives me great privilege to stand up in this House every time I get an opportunity, and certainly, in this case, to talk about small business, which really is, as I've heard around the House today, the backbone of Manitoba's economy, and it certainly is. And recognizing Manitoba's small businesses is an extremely important offer to do and we agree with that.

However, we certainly don't agree with everything that's going on with the members across the floor. And I just wanted to take the opportunity, first of all, to talk about my 35, almost 40 years in small business and getting our start—*[interjection]* Yes, it's an incredible journey being an entrepreneur.

I know on this side of the House we have a number of entrepreneurs, and I believe there are a couple on that side of the House, too, as well. So certainly if the members on the opposite side needed a little direction or support, we're happy on this side of the House to help you with your small businesses, because that's what we do on this side of the House is support small business.

But, you know, certain things have been going on under the NDP in the last 16, 17 months and things that are not supporting small businesses. We know that we talked about in question—when we had a question for the member for Seine River (MLA Cross), which the member refused to respond to and pivoted to, I don't know, maybe something else, but it's important. And I hope that one day, the member has an opportunity to explain to Manitobans why one of the first initiatives that her government

did was cut—simply eliminate the commissions on PST renewals—or reviews to the province.

So I—it's interesting, because we heard about this even, actually, before it hit the media, I think, through a small business. So somebody must have sent out some kind of a directive saying, by the way, get your house in order, small business, we're coming after you, and by the way, we're going to cut the commission that you receive to do our work.

But that's kind of an NDP—that's in their DNA is to pass on the hard work and the heavy lifting to other members, particularly on our side of the House, where we do all the heavy lifting for Manitobans, but for small businesses. Small and medium and large-sized businesses.

The member talks about supporting small business. Well, I can tell the member being about a medium-sized business myself and growing from a small business from a one-bedroom home—my wife and I ran our business.

Honourable Speaker, my wife—and I must give my wife a hundred per cent credit today publicly and put it on the record that I can tell you that without my wife's support and her partnership in our business together, I would not have the success and she wouldn't have enjoyed the successes that we enjoy being small business owners.

To you, honey.

It takes—it literally takes a team. It takes a family. It takes everybody rowing in the same direction. I understand, of course, the NDP don't understand that, so let's see if we can do that today.

Second of all, I just wanted to talk about some of the areas that are really sticking out to me today.

And the one that really, really slaps me is the fact that nobody on that side of the House has spoke up to talk about small business today, Honourable Speaker. Not one of them have gotten up and said anything about small business.

The businesses that they're trying to support today with this resolution—or bill, pardon me, they can't even stand up and talk about them. I don't understand it. Like, maybe they'll look in the mirror tonight and

they'll say, geez, why didn't I get up and talk about all those—

* (11:00)

The Speaker: Order, please.

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

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

House Business

MLA David Pankratz (Deputy Government House Leader): Honourable Speaker, pursuant to rule 34(7), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Seine River (MLA Cross). The

title of the resolution is Encouraging Manitobans to Support Local.

The Speaker: It has been announced that pursuant to rule—*[interjection]*

Order.

It has been announced that pursuant to rule 34(7), the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Seine River. The title of the resolution is Encouraging Manitobans to Support Local.

MLA Pankratz: Honourable Speaker, is it the will of the House to see it as 12 o'clock?

The Speaker: Is it the will of the House to see it as 12 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 12 o'clock, the House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

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