



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 22, 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 and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Please be seated.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** Could you please call for concurrence and third reading Bill 232, The Victims of Impaired Drivers Commemoration Day Act.

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that we will now go to concurrence and third reading of Bill 232, The Victims of Impaired Drivers Commemoration Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

### CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

#### Bill 232—The Victims of Impaired Drivers Commemoration Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** I move, seconded by the member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza), that Bill 232, The Victims of Impaired Drivers Commemoration Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), be—

reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and now read for a third time and passed.

## *Motion presented.*

**Mr. Balcaen:** It gives me great pleasure to rise for what I hope is the last time on this bill and have it approved today and moved forward.

It is not a bill that I will take credit for. This has to go to the family of Jordyn Reimer. The advocacy that has happened is immeasurable, the amount of work that has been put forward by this family. But again, it's not only this family; it's for all victims of impaired driving across our great province.

I'm very proud to say that, when passed, this bill will be the only recognition in all of Canada for a commemoration day for victims of impaired driving. And I must say that the victims of impaired driving are not only those that suffer at the time of the incident; it extends to immediate family, to extended family, to friends, to colleagues, to co-workers. And, as we've seen with many tragedies of this nature, it extends to the communities that these individuals live in.

I know for Transcona this was a very difficult time for the family but for the community of Transcona. And we look very recently at the incident involving Kellie Verwey and her family in the communities of Portage la Prairie and surrounding area, and the absolute devastation when this happens.

I think it needs to be put on record and noted that this is a choice that individuals make, to drive impaired. It's not an accident; it's a purposeful act. And just like the Reimer family has mentioned before, a vehicle is the weapon. Giving the keys to an individual is the catalyst to use that weapon, and getting behind the wheel of a vehicle, you are responsible for everything that happens.

I'm hoping that this bill will bring some sort of closure to families, to allow them to have a day to recognize the impact that such crimes have on families, friends and communities, but also on the first responders and those that are responsible for dealing with these accidents or crashes or incidents that happen because of an impaired driver.

It's an opportunity to never forget that these individuals meant the world to people, and that they are now taken from us, and so incidents such as weddings, graduations, milestones within their lifetime, children, grandchildren, will never be there for the families or for friends or for communities to celebrate. So to be able to remember the individuals is extremely important.

I thank the Reimer family for extensive consultation on this bill. We're noting May 1 as the day of commemoration, and that, of course, is in respect and remembrance of Jordyn Reimer who was killed on May 1, 2022, as a result of an act by an individual, a purposeful act.

But I'm hoping that this also adds an opportunity for education—education in a very timely manner when graduations are coming forward, when summer is upon us, where people may have a few beverages or, in the case that we've seen, the exponential growth in the use of drugs. And it's not just marijuana; it's a large plethora of intoxicants that people can get behind the wheel and cause this injury.

\* (10:10)

So having the opportunity to educate people. And I know it was brought forward that maybe our youth are not always the ones that are involved in this; it goes across every age group, every demographic. But I think it's important that we start at a very young age to engrain this education into young minds, young drivers, so that they are the next generations that don't allow this to happen.

I would be remiss if I didn't recognize, once again, the family of Jordyn Reimer who is here joining us in the gallery today to see this bill pass third reading. And it is in recognition of their tremendous efforts and to know that their advocacy has moved this forward, I'm incredibly appreciative of.

So with those few words, Honourable Speaker, thank you for the opportunity and we look forward to a unanimous support on this bill.

Thank you.

#### **French spoken**

**MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface):** Bien trop souvent, nous voyons des histoires de Manitobains qui ont perdu la vie à cause de la conduite avec facultés affaiblies. En tant que père de famille – je suis le père de deux filles jumelles, 22 ans – je m'inquiète de mes enfants. Je m'inquiète de ma communauté. Et en tant qu'éducateur, j'ai fait de mon mieux : j'ai fait mon

devoir à éduquer les jeunes Manitobains et les jeunes Manitobaines en ce qui se rapporte avec la conduite avec facultés affaiblies.

#### **Translation**

*Far too often, we see stories of Manitobans who have lost their lives because of impaired driving. I am the father of twin 22-year-old daughters, and as a father, I worry about my children. I care about my community. As an educator, I have done my best: I have done my duty to educate young Manitobans about impaired driving.*

#### **English**

As a father of two, as an educator, I think it's important that we continue the important work of educating that it's never acceptable to drink and drive. And this is an issue that touches all communities, whether they be rural or urban, francophone, anglophone or other languages, other cultures. You just don't drink and drive. It's just that simple.

So I think it's important that I put down some words in French. As an educator, I think it's important to get the message out because I worry about my daughters. I worry about their friends. I worry about my community. I don't ever want any other family to go through what the Reimer family has gone through.

#### **French spoken**

Donc, l'Honorable Président, notre gouvernement néo-démocrate a présenté une législation qui imposera des 'pleines' plus sévères à ceux qui prennent la décision de conduire en état d'ébriété. Nous sommes déterminés à rendre nos routes plus sûres pour tous les Manitobains et Manitobaines, afin qu'aucun Manitobain ne soit jamais tué par un conducteur en état d'ébriété, et qu'aucune famille n'ait à sentir la douleur qui en découle.

Notre gouvernement est résolu à rendre nos routes plus sûres. Nous avons déjà commencé à mettre en œuvre une législation plus stricte contre la conduite avec facultés affaiblies afin qu'aucune famille n'ait à ressentir la douleur de perdre un proche à cause d'un conducteur en état d'ébriété. Et, avec l'aide de MADD Canada en tant que réseau des victimes de survivants et de citoyens préoccupés par la conduite avec facultés affaiblies, MADD Canada a eu un impact important sur le mouvement de lutte contre la conduite avec facultés affaiblies. Et en tant qu'éducateur de longue date, éducateur chevronné, j'ai vu et j'ai participé aux présentations de MADD Canada dans les écoles.

Et j'ai vu l'impact que ces présentations peuvent avoir avec nos élèves, et je crois que ces présentations continueront avoir un impact à long terme sur nos jeunes élèves.

Chaque année, MADD soutient les forces de l'ordre dans la mise en œuvre d'un programme de points de contrôle pendant les fêtes, afin de protéger les Manitobains contre les conducteurs en état d'ébriété, et on l'a vu encore cette année pendant le temps des fêtes au mois de décembre. MADD entretient également une relation étroite avec MPI pour prendre les mesures nécessaires afin de prévenir la conduite avec facultés affaiblies.

Notre gouvernement s'est associé à MADD Canada pour rédiger ce projet de loi et la présidente nationale, Tanya Hansen Pratt, était à nos côtés lors de son introduction. Et je cite : Nous reconnaissons qu'il existe pas une seule loi qui réglera le problème de la conduite avec facultés affaiblies, et nous saluons les mesures prises par le gouvernement pour s'attaquer à ceux qui causent les torts les plus graves.

Et j'ajoute : C'est certainement une excellente initiative pour le Manitoba. J'aime que le Manitoba ne se contente pas d'apprendre ou d'attendre que le système judiciaire criminel rattrape son retard. Depuis trop longtemps, les tribunaux criminels ne traitent pas la conduite avec facultés affaiblies comme le crime violent qu'il est.

La conduite dangereuse fait du tort aux Manitobains. Chaque année, des milliers de Manitobains sont blessés en raison des effets de la conduite avec facultés affaiblies. Et en 2023, la conduite avec facultés affaiblies était responsable de près de tous les accidents mortels ici au Manitoba. Ce ne sont pas seulement les victimes directes qui sont touchées, mais aussi leurs familles et leurs amis.

Le précédent gouvernement progressiste conservateur a eu sept ans et demi pour introduire une législation afin de sévir contre la conduite avec facultés affaiblies. Mais il a échoué à son devoir et a échoué à le faire.

Notre gouvernement veut prévenir les décès sur nos routes causés par les conducteurs aux facultés affaiblies. C'est pourquoi nous travaillons à assurer la sécurité des Manitobains. Nous avons présenté récemment une législation qui imposera des peines plus sévères à ceux qui prennent la décision de conduire en état d'ébriété.

Bien trop souvent, nous lisons des histoires tragiques de Manitobains tués par des conducteurs

avec facultés affaiblies. Jordyn Reimer a été tragiquement tuée après avoir été percutée par un conducteur en état d'ébriété alors qu'elle allait chercher une amie.

C'est inacceptable, l'Honorable Président. C'est tragique, et nous devons faire mieux.

Chaque année, MADD soutient les forces de l'ordre dans la mise en œuvre d'un programme de barrages routiers pendant les fêtes pour protéger les Manitobains contre les conducteurs en état d'ébriété. En 2024 seulement, les résultats du programme de MADD ont été alarmants et montrent à quel point trop souvent des personnes conduisent avec facultés affaiblies. La police de Winnipeg avec un communiqué de janvier 2025 a annoncé qu'ils ont intercepté 3 933 véhicules dont 124 conducteurs ont été trouvés sous l'influence de l'alcool ou de drogues. C'est inacceptable.

C'est pourquoi nous continuons à vous protéger, vous et votre famille, en créant des lois plus strictes avec des sanctions plus sévères contre la faculté avec facultés affaiblies.

L'Honorable Président, personne ne devrait jamais prendre le volant en état sous l'influence. C'est non négociable. Les Manitobains méritent de pouvoir conduire et arriver à destination en toute sécurité sans craindre d'être victime d'un conducteur en état d'ébriété. Ils s'attendent aussi à ce que le gouvernement provincial prenne des mesures fermes contre la conduite avec facultés affaiblies.

\*(10:20)

Le Manitoba était autrefois l'une des provinces les plus strictes en matière de sanctions pour conduite avec facultés affaiblies. Un sondage routier en 2022 a relevé que la moitié des personnes interrogées ne connaissent pas la limite légale d'alcoolémie ni la quantité d'alcool nécessaire pour la dépasser.

Et c'est pourquoi, l'Honorable Président, nous nous engageons en tant de gouvernement pour mieux faire. Notre objectif est de protéger les Manitobains et les Manitobaines, non seulement avec des lois strictes et fermes, mais aussi avec des programmes d'éducation comme je l'ai mentionné, avec MADD Canada dans nos écoles. C'est en éduquant les jeunes élèves, les jeunes non seulement à l'élémentaire, mais les jeunes au secondaire, que conduire en état d'ébriété est simplement inacceptable.

J'aimerais encore une fois partager mes condoléances avec la famille ici présente, et je veux leur assurer que notre gouvernement s'engage à faire mieux.

Merci, l'Honorable Président.

### **Translation**

*Thus, Honourable Speaker, our NDP government has introduced legislation that will impose tougher penalties on those who make the decision to drink and drive. We are committed to making our roads safer for all Manitobans, so that no Manitoban is ever killed by a drunk driver, and no family ever has to feel the pain of such a loss.*

*Our government is committed to making our roads safer. We have already begun to implement tougher legislation against impaired driving so that no family has to feel the pain of losing a loved one to an impaired driver. MADD Canada is a network of victims, survivors and concerned citizens who help, and MADD Canada has had a significant impact on the impaired driving movement.*

*As a long-time and experienced educator, I have observed and participated in MADD Canada's school presentations, and I have seen the impact that these presentations can have on our students. I believe that these presentations will continue to have a long-term impact on our young students.*

*Every year, MADD supports law enforcement in implementing a holiday checkpoint program to protect Manitobans from impaired drivers, and we saw that again this year during the December holiday season. MADD also maintains a close relationship with MPI to take the necessary steps to prevent impaired driving.*

*Our government partnered with MADD Canada to draft this bill, and National President Tanya Hansen Pratt was with us when it was introduced. While recognizing that no single law will solve the problem of impaired driving, she applauded the government's action to tackle those who cause the greatest harm, adding that this is certainly a great initiative for Manitoba and that she liked the fact that Manitoba was not just learning or waiting for the criminal justice system to catch up, since the criminal courts have not treated impaired driving as the violent crime that it is for too long now.*

*Dangerous driving hurts Manitobans. Every year, thousands of Manitobans are injured in impaired driving incidents. In 2023, impaired driving was*

*responsible for nearly all fatal crashes here in Manitoba. It is not just the direct victims who are affected, but also their families and friends.*

*The previous Progressive Conservative government had seven and a half years to introduce legislation to crack down on impaired driving. But it failed in its duty and failed to deliver.*

*Our government wants to prevent deaths on our roads caused by impaired drivers. That is why we are working to keep Manitobans safe. We recently introduced legislation that will impose tougher penalties on those who make the decision to drive while impaired.*

*Far too often, we read tragic stories of Manitobans killed by impaired drivers. Jordyn Reimer was tragically killed after being hit by a drunk driver while on her way to pick up a friend.*

*This is unacceptable, Honourable Speaker. It is tragic, and we must do better.*

*Every year, MADD supports law enforcement in implementing a holiday roadblock program to protect Manitobans from impaired drivers. In 2024 alone, the results of MADD's program have been alarming and show just how often people drive impaired. In a January 2025 press release, the Winnipeg Police Service announced that they had intercepted 3,933 vehicles, in which 124 drivers were found to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. This is unacceptable.*

*That is why we are continuing to protect you and your family by creating tougher laws with stiffer penalties against impaired driving.*

*Honourable Speaker, no one should ever get behind the wheel while under the influence. This is non-negotiable. Manitobans deserve to be able to drive and arrive at their destination safely without fear of being victimized by an impaired driver. They also expect the provincial government to take firm action against impaired driving.*

*Manitoba used to be one of the toughest provinces in regard to penalties for impaired driving. A roadside survey in 2022 showed that half the people questioned did not know the legal blood alcohol limit, or the amount of alcohol needed to exceed it.*

*That is why, Honourable Speaker, we are committed as a government to do better. Our goal is to protect Manitobans, not only with strong, tough laws, but also with education programs like the ones I mentioned, with MADD Canada in our schools teaching our*

*young students, at both elementary and high school levels, that drinking and driving is simply unacceptable.*

*Once again, I would like to share my condolences with the family here, and I want to assure them that our government is committed to doing better.*

*Thank you, Honourable Speaker.*

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** I just want to talk a little bit about the background that—of this important decision that we're making today. This bill commemorates the lives of victims lost to the dangerous act that is impaired driving. This bill is in remembrance of Jordyn Reimer, who was killed by an impaired driver and all other victims of impaired driving.

And I think we can sit in this House today and not one of us here today doesn't know of someone that was impacted, either killed or has had their lives changed forever because of impaired driving. I want to make sure that we thank MADD Canada and MADD Winnipeg for all of their work that they have done on this as well. We do. And we think of other people. And to the Reimer family and to the Verwey family, the pain will never go away. The pain may subside, but what you are doing, and your courage, will make a difference in our province forever and ever moving forward. And that's why we need to move on this unanimously in moving forward.

I think about my girls, 33 and 35 years old; they're adults. They can make their own decisions. But every night and every day that I know they go out; I know that my oldest daughter travels for work and I think about it every day. And spending some time with the Reimer family and the Verwey family, I don't want to go through what you have gone through. Again, we have to salute the courage of the families for what they have come through, what they have gone through. And I also want to mention on the words today, I'm thinking about Kelly Watson; I'm thinking about Jimmy Roe, who were affected by somebody that got in a 2,000-pound or more death trap and affected their lives.

What we do in this Legislature every day, we got elected to make decisions to make Manitoba a better place, to make sure that we are listening to people like the Reimers and the Verwey family to make sure that we are advocating for them and all the Manitobans that have come before them, that have done this—that have been in this situation as well.

I want to thank, again, the MLA from Brandon West for all of your hard work that has gone into this, that

is going to impact so many Manitobans, so many Canadians.

Let's be leaders in this country. Let's lead by example. This is a non-partisan issue. Let's pass this unanimously.

And again, my thoughts go to the Reimers and the Verwey family. Thank you for all of your work.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families):** I just want to take a couple of minutes just to put a couple of words on the record in respect of bill 32, The Victims of Impaired Drivers Commemoration Day Act, commemoration of days, weeks, months act amended.

First and foremost, like everybody that has gotten up in the Chamber to speak to this bill, I want to offer my heartfelt condolences to the family.

And I think that everybody that's gotten up to speak to Bill 232 has reflected on their own children. And I think that that's a way that—of course, nobody will ever fully appreciate or experience that incredible heartbreak, and I think all of us in this Chamber as legislators can appreciate through our own children.

And I look at Jordyn being 24 years old and my youngest is 23 years old and none of us can imagine that enormous heartbreak and that enormous pain and the enormous trauma that that would cause in—you know, for the parents and the siblings and the family and the extended family and the community and the friends. It truly is a horrific, horrific ordeal.

And so I want to just, on behalf of our whole caucus, just again, once again, just offer our heartfelt condolences and that we stand with the family. No family should ever experience something so incredibly egregious and traumatizing.

Like other members in the Chamber that have gotten up in the House, I also want to say miigwech to the family and to the friends and to the community to be able to advocate for their daughter and advocate for the greater collective in ensuring that this doesn't ever happen again.

It takes an enormous amount of strength and courage and determination and resiliency to be able to put forward actions that will ultimately help to protect citizens. And so I just—I cannot say enough the profound respect that I have for the family and for the community and for friends.

And then finally I just want to say, today is really in honour of Jordyn. Anything that is—has been said in

this Chamber, anything that we do, no matter which side of the House that we sit on, ultimately, this moment at 10:30 a.m. is in honour of Jordyn.

Miigwech.

**The Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** The question before the House, then, is concurrence and third reading of Bill 232, The Victims of Impaired Drivers Commemoration Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

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

\* (10:30)

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** Is there will of the House to call it unanimous?

**The Speaker:** Is there will of the House to call the vote unanimous? *[Agreed]*

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Honourable Speaker, can we—that the bill was unanimous, please, if we can record it as such.

**The Speaker:** The bill is accordingly recorded as being unanimous, passed unanimously.

The hour being 10:30, what is the will of the House?

**MLA Fontaine:** Honourable Speaker, is there leave to call it 11 a.m.?

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to call it 11 a.m.? Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

## RESOLUTIONS

### Res. 17—Ensuring Reliable Emergency Services in Rural Manitoba

**The Speaker:** The hour being 11 a.m., it is now time for private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is resolution no. 17, Ensuring Reliable Emergency Services in Rural Manitoba.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** I move, seconded by the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler),

*WHEREAS reliable access to emergency services, including 911, is a fundamental public safety necessity and can mean the difference between life and death; and*

*WHEREAS on March 23, 2025, a resident in the RM of Fisher tragically passed away after family and friends were unable to reach 911, despite making numerous attempts, due to an internal 911 routing malfunction at major cellular provider; and*

*WHEREAS during the emergency, loved ones attempted to provide CPR while frantically trying to connect with emergency medical services, ultimately only reaching help by contacting a local RCMP officer directly; and*

*WHEREAS the March 2025 tragedy is not an isolated incident, there have been reports of failed 911 cellular calls from neighbouring RM's; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government indicated in April of 2024 that it was undertaking a review of 911 services and that a final report would be expected in the coming months however further tragedy ensued with no report released; and*

*WHEREAS rural Manitobans continue to face challenges accessing emergency services due to unreliable cell service and gaps in the ability of service providers to connect with emergency telecommunication infrastructure, especially in areas like the Interlake; and*

*WHEREAS the 911 dispatch centre serving rural and northern Manitoba was not alerted to the fact that they were not receiving inbound 911 calls until hours after the incident, raising concerns about the lack of real-time monitoring and coordination between telecommunication service providers and emergency response systems; and*

*WHEREAS local officials, including the RM of Fisher, have previously raised concerns with the Provincial Government and the RCMP about the reliability of 911 services in rural areas, calling for immediate action; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government must ensure that emergency communication systems are adequately staffed and resourced, particularly for rural and northern regions, and that 911 access is not compromised by private sector infrastructure failures; and*

*WHEREAS failure to invest in resilient, province-wide emergency response systems and telecommunications infrastructure puts rural lives at risk and undermines public confidence in essential services*



THEREFORE BE—RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to investigate and release a report in its entirety regarding the causes of the 911 network failures that contributed to the tragic loss of the—in the Interlake region and commit to working with municipalities, telecommunications providers and first responders to strengthen 911 reliability so that all Manitobans, including those in rural and northern communities, have uninterrupted access to emergency services.

**The Speaker:** As the House called it 11 o'clock at 10:26–10:31, the previously announced recorded vote that was to be held on 208 at 11:55 will now be held at 11:26. And we will call it noon at 11:51–11:31.

It has been moved by the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson), seconded by the honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler), that

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to investigate and release a report in its entirety regarding the causes of the 911 network failures that contributed to the tragic loss in the Interlake region and commit to working with municipalities, telecommunications providers and first responders to strengthen 911 reliability so that all Manitobans, including those in rural and northern communities, have uninterrupted access to the emergency services.

**Mr. Johnson:** Honourable Speaker, I rise today to speak on a matter that lies at the very heart of public safety, ensuring reliable access to emergency services for all Manitobans, no matter where they live.

Emergency services are not a luxury, they're not a matter of convenience, they are a lifeline. In times of crisis, when every second counts, people must be able to rely on 911. Whether it's a heart attack, a fire or an accident on a rural road, the public needs to know that help is only a phone call away.

But tragically, as we have seen far too recently, that is not always the case in rural Manitoba. On March 23, 2025, a devastating tragedy occurred in the rural municipality of Fisher. A resident, a husband, a loved one lost his life after family members and friends made numerous attempts to call 911, only to be met with silence. The calls did not go through.

They did not fail because of severe weather or a downed power line. They did not fail because a beaver chewed a wire, in the case that the minister tabled the other day.

They failed because of 911 routing malfunction, a technical failure within a major cellular provider's network, and in the moments where time was slipping away, that failure cost a life.

While loved ones performed CPR, desperate and doing everything they could, they were also frantically trying to connect to emergency services and ultimately reach help, not through 911, but by directly contacting an RCMP officer.

Imagine, Honourable Speaker, the helplessness of performing CPR while dialing 911 again and again, hoping for a ring tone that never comes.

Honourable Speaker, 22 unanswered calls. That is the cruel reality that this family endured, and it is a reality that no other family in Manitoba should ever have to experience.

What makes this tragedy even more distressing is that it was not an isolated incident. There have been multiple reports of failed 911 calls in neighbouring municipalities. It's not about a single error or one tragic event; this is about systemic failure, one that has been known to the provincial government for over a year, and one for which little to nothing has been done.

Back in April of 2024, the provincial government announced that it would review 911 services in Manitoba and that a report would be forthcoming. But when another 911 service failure occurred just a few months later, in August of 2024, the response from the provincial representatives was the same: more platitudes, more delays.

And now, a full year later, yet another heart-breaking tragedy and still report—still no 'report,' still no action, still no accountability.

Honourable Speaker, the people of rural Manitoba are tired of excuses, they are tired of being ignored and they are tired of being treated as second-class citizens when it comes to basic emergency services.

Rural Manitobans, especially those in areas like the Interlake, continue to face serious challenges accessing emergency services. This is due, in part, to inadequate cellular coverage, gaps in telecommunications infrastructure and a lack of co-ordination between private providers and emergency response systems.

The 911 dispatch centre in Brandon, which serves rural and northern Manitoba, wasn't aware that it wasn't receiving calls for days. It took days before the centre was alerted to the malfunction from the family

in Fisher. This lack of real-time monitoring and communication is unacceptable and obviously dangerous.

Let me be clear: in this day and age, people should not die because a cellphone cannot connect to 911. And they certainly should not die while the government sits on reports, offers empty reassurances and fails to take action on issues that have been flagged over and over again, not just by the residents, but by local officials, municipal leaders and even RCMP officers themselves.

The RM of Fisher has repeatedly raised concerns about 911 reliability. Other communities have voiced similar fears. All have called for one thing: immediate action. But those calls gone to this failing NDP government, just like the 911 calls, have gone unanswered with this NDP government.

It is the right of every Manitoban, regardless of where they live or who their mobile provider is, is to expect that 911 will work in emergencies. This is not a partisan issue, it is a matter of basic public safety and human decency.

Honourable Speaker, we can do and must do better. This provincial government has a responsibility to ensure that 911 systems are properly funded, resilient and responsive. That includes ensuring real-time monitoring of 911 systems across the province; automatic alerts when dispatch centres experience call drop-off or anomalies; fail-safe routing protocols so that when one network fails, calls are rerouted immediately through another; strong collaboration between the Province, municipalities, telecommunication providers and emergency services to develop clear, co-ordinated protocols; and a publicly released investigation into the March 2025 failure with concrete timelines and commitments for improvement.

\* (10:40)

We also need to invest in staffing in Infrastructure, particularly in rural and northern regions. Many communities are already dealing with long EMS response times and hospital closures. A failed 911 call in those areas can be catastrophic.

And let us not forget the mental and emotional toll these failures take. Families are traumatized not only by the loss of loved ones, but by the knowledge that the calls for help went unanswered. We owe them more than condolences; we owe them action.

There is a growing disconnect between public expectations and government delivery on essential services. The public wants to know that when they call

911, someone will pick up; that help will come and that their rural postal code doesn't make their life less valuable.

I urge this Assembly to pass a clear resolution: to urge the provincial government to fully investigate the 911 network failures that contributed to the Fisher tragedy; quickly release the findings of that investigation to the public and develop a clear road map in consultation with municipalities, telecom providers and front-line responders to strengthen 911 reliability; and guarantee fail-safe access to emergency services for every Manitoban, regardless of geography or cellular network.

Now let us remember that the victims of these failures are not statistics. They are mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, neighbours and friends. To the family that lost their loved one in Fisher: We see you, we hear you and we are committed to making sure this never happens again.

I want every member opposite to say Dean Switzer's name when they speak to this resolution to make it personal, to realize that he left a wife, Susan, who frantically tried to save him, along with his friends and family. Dean's parents have been advocating since the loss to ensure that this will not happen to somebody else's loved one.

Let us rise—rise above bureaucracy. Let us rise above excuses. Let us rise to the occasion as leaders entrusted with the safety and well-being of all Manitobans. This is our moment to act, to fix what's broken, to ensure that when the next emergency comes—and it will—that the call goes through.

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) said in this Chamber the other day: an apology without 'restitution' is an empty apology. We need to get these reports out whether there's an apology or not from this government. We need to ensure that the members know exactly—my constituents know exactly—what happened with these failings.

And a lack of action after a tragic incident—or I would say three similar incidences—show that this callous, failing N-D-T-NDP government does not truly care about Manitobans or my constituents in Interlake-Gimli.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### Questions

**The Speaker:** A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question asked by a member

from another party; any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties; and each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

**MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo):** During the member's time in their previous failed government, they repeatedly cut funding and privatized emergency services that are a lifeline for rural Manitobans.

Can the member explain why their previous failed government decided to retract vital services and funding for emergency services in rural Manitoba?

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** Well, I hope that member knows that Dean Switzer's family is watching this today, and the assertions that they're putting on there of the former government not doing anything is ridiculous and absurd. These incidences have happened during this current government; they have promised a report. We are waiting for report and so is the Switzer family.

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** Unfortunately, in my constituency, as a result of the recent wildfires, I've seen the effects of the lack of functionality of the 911 services.

Would I be able to ask the member: Who is responsible for monitoring 911 call functionality?

**Mr. Johnson:** Well, technically it falls under the Minister of Infrastructure. There's an act that falls under that department, but she has not been able to get up and put any words on the record of what she's going to do for the Switzer family. So I really hope that that member chooses to get up and ask some questions here today and puts her words on the record in her allotted time to ensure the Switzer family has some closure after this.

**MLA Compton:** During the members opposite time in government, they failed to introduce reliable cell service to rural Manitoba. We're working to bring more reliable cell service to ensure that every Manitoban is able to connect with the services they need.

Will the member explain while they failed to bring reliable cell service to rural Manitobans during their seven and a half years in government?

**Mr. Johnson:** What—this member stands with the rest of its caucus and their failures of releasing a report that could include this incident in Fisher for the Switzer family. So that's what we're doing here today.

This resolution is calling for the government to release that report, among it many other things of ensuring that when somebody in rural Manitoba picks up the phone and dials 911, it's answered.

**Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain):** I just want to thank the member for bringing this urgent matter to this Chamber right now, because it's important that when we all live in rural Manitoba it's important that we get good cell service.

And what steps has this government taken since the 2025 Interlake 'tragedy' to ensure that 911 call failures are identified and addressed in real time?

**Mr. Johnson:** Well, quite frankly, this failing NDP government has done nothing but lip service and make promises. They promised that a report was coming forward; not once but twice. And we'll see what they put on the record today, if they're going to continue to promise for a report, I would be curious to know if it's even started.

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** As someone who worked rural EMS and stood with families like the Switzers, I just want to say, first of all, I'm so sorry for your loss. It is terrible, absolutely terrible. I've been in the room with folks like that in those situations. It is a really challenging situation.

I do have to say a big reason why I got involved in politics was because of the callous decisions of the members opposite on emergency services. So it is really disappointing for me to stand here and hear some of the things being put on the record by members opposite. And I would say we're working closely with the Minister of Health and multiple ministers to make sure there's more staff and more resources for rural EMS.

I would just ask the member opposite: Why did he spend his time in office gutting emergency services across the province?

**Mr. Johnson:** Well, that member's obviously inaccurate in his assertions. What he can do today is he can stand with us on this side of the House and ask for the government to ensure that if somebody from rural Manitoba—like the Switzer family who lost a loved one—when they dial 911, their phone call will be routed and answered in the call centre in Brandon.

**Mr. Narth:** It's concerning that the member from Tuxedo speaks against utilizing private services and instead perfectly comfortable with family members dying when they aren't able to access the service that they lack.

Would the member from Interlake-Gimli—  
[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Narth:** —be able to tell us what he's been doing—  
[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Narth:** —to get to the bottom of this issue?  
[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Order. [interjection]

The Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) will come to order.

\* (10:50)

The honourable member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth)—the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson).

**Mr. Johnson:** Yes, there was so much yelling and heckling across, I couldn't quite hear the question, but what we're doing on this side of the House is we're bringing resolutions like this forward to put pressure on the government to actually act.

They claim they are doing a report. They have talked about the report many times. Is it a fictitious report? Probably. If not, just please release it so the members of the Switzer family and rural Manitobans can have peace in knowing that when they pick up the phone to dial 911 who will be answered.

**MLA Compton:** I would like to be clear, in no uncertain terms am I about private health care and is no one on this side of the House for private care. I have worked over 18 years in the public health-care system, and I take great offence at the insinuation that I don't care.

And I would really like to ask the members opposite if they can really explain why they choose—have chosen to defund over their seven and a half years in government? Like my member, the member from Waverley, I am here because of what the previous government did to our health-care system. Please answer.

**Mr. Johnson:** Yes, the minister—I just wanted to bring up that the minister that they deem responsible tabled a letter the other day about land lines being an issue back in 2017. We're talking about people picking up the phone and having connection with 911. That document that was tabled by the member showed a beaver had chewed a telecommunications line, and they're comparing the two together.

I'd like that member to get up and explain that today, in their time allotted, why they think the chewing of a telecoms line versus not pick—not yet having 911 calls answered is equivalent.

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** I'd like to again thank the MLA there for bringing this forward.

Why did the Minister of Innovation and New Technology (MLA Moroz) take weeks and several questions before disclosing he had written and met with TELUS?

**Mr. Johnson:** Well, I don't know. My guess would be potentially a letter was written at a much later date than what's date-stamped on the top of the letter. I would question that because you'd think he would've tabled that in the House sooner for public to know that there is reach out to the telecoms provider in question in this incident.

But the importance of today is to pressure the government to ensure that someone in rural Manitoba picks up their phone and they need help, they call 911, that it's answered.

**MLA Compton:** Our government is working hard to create more reliable health-care services in rural Manitoba by creating more paramedic positions and training opportunities. During the PC's previous failed government, their policies left paramedics overworked and underpaid, failing to bring relief to paramedics in Manitoba.

Can the member opposite explain why their government failed to help rural Manitobans by stretching their rural EMS services so thinly?

**Mr. Johnson:** And this member must, must know that her government closed 20 rural emergency rooms in rural Manitoba. They were doing a circle around the province, closing, closing, closing, closing.

Their solution when they didn't have enough staff to staff a hospital? We will close it, we will move the people to the ER in the neighbouring hospital and we'll just have less ERs for rural Manitoba. That's not fair just because your postal code is rural Manitoba. And today is about ensuring that somebody picks up the phone, they get answered when they dial 911.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The time for questions has expired.

### Debate

**The Speaker:** The floor is now open for debate.

**Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** I'd like to thank the member opposite for bringing forward this important resolution about rural emergency services.

It's a very important topic and I think everybody here in this Chamber extends their deepest condolences to the Switzer family. This type of death is made even more harder because of the type of circumstances that surrounded it that shouldn't have happened. And we, again, extend our deepest condolences to this family and hope that they have healing in the future.

To the Switzer family and to all rural Manitobans, our government wants you to know that we ran on health care for a reason. This is our top priority as a government to come here to this Chamber and on behalf of all Manitobans to fix health care, especially rural health care, and health care in the North as well, because we know that this is where there is the deepest staff shortages and this is where we really need to focus on.

Our government takes health care seriously. We're always working hard to ensure that every Manitoban has access to the health care that they need and deserve and we're doing this because we're a listening government. When Manitobans entrusted us with leading this great province, they told us that they wanted us to see the improvements in our system and for the past 18 months, that's exactly what we've been doing.

Members opposite, all they did was cut in their time here, in health care, and it was just devastating results, especially for rural and northern health. But we're here to clean up the mess that they've made. My colleague, the MLA for Transcona will be spending some time discussing the cuts that were made under the previous government. I'm going to talk about stuff that we are currently doing.

In Budget 2025, we've made several improvements in the public health care system that would ensure greater access to emergency services in rural Manitoba. As part of our work to create more paramedic positions, we've invested \$458,790 to create 16 additional training seats at the University College of the North. To create safer neighbourhoods across the province and especially in rural areas, we've invested an additional \$5.3 million into the RCMP emergency response team and their operational communications centre.

We are currently rebuilding the Eriksdale ER. That's no small feat after it was closed by the previous

government. Our government is also opening new facilities in Boundary Trails Health Centre, Bethesda Regional Health Centre, Portage regional health centre and Neepawa regional health centre.

In Ashern-Lakeshore hospital there are a new 12 in-patient beds and six emergency department beds. We're very proud of this progress. And to increase our preparedness in case of wildfires, we're also investing \$81 million to replace wildfire-fighting infrastructure like waterbombers and creating a new fire base at the Thompson Airport. All this will improve our emergency services.

In 2024, our government was, you know, began that work of reducing the gap in rural health care. We started to do that by restoring the cuts under the previous government to the rural doctor recruitment fund to help Manitobans get care closer to home. We've also spent \$16.1 million last year in on-going funding for emergency ground transport, including the funding of two 24-7 ambulances in Brandon and Thompson, and the paramedics to support them. We've also funded new training dollars and created positions for advanced-care paramedics to work in rural and northern Manitoba.

So Manitobans can rest assured that we are taking our job very seriously, that we are focusing on the needs in rural Manitoba and in the North because we know that this is where the need is actually the greatest, and so, you know, like a good parent, you focus on, you know, the needs that are the greatest. And this is what we're trying to do as a government too.

And it is well worth noting that the Minister of Innovation and New Technology (MLA Moroz) met with TELUS last week to find out exactly what happened, so that we could do whatever it is that we need to do to make sure that every Manitoban can access emergency services.

I am the Immigration and Labour Minister, but that doesn't mean that I do not have a part in fixing rural and northern health care.

\* (11:00)

So in my mandate later, which is publicly accessible, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) asked me to remove the accreditation to—barriers for an accreditation for all newcomers that have professional degrees, but beginning with internationally educated health professions.

So on day 2 of my job, back in October 2023, I first made the visit to the fairness registration practices office. Members opposite doesn't even know what that is; all they did was to cut it. They cut most of that.

But that was the first visit that I made as the Immigration Minister to one of the departments. And one of the things that we—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. If the member could make her comments relevant to the resolution before us this morning, that would be appreciated.

**MLA Marcelino:** I'm trying to explain that part of my job as the Immigration Minister is to help with increasing the staffing shortages in health care, and one of the ways that I do that, even in what seems to be a faraway position as Immigration Minister, is to actually remove unfair barriers to accreditation for health-care workers.

And so one of the things that we did was we stood up a nurse re-entry program, and this is very, very important work to do, because who is going to staff these ERs that we're putting up? Who is going to staff those? And we already have folks in rural Manitoba that were internationally educated health professions that live in rural Manitoba and were not being able to actually get their accreditation to do that.

So the government, under my leadership, in conjunction with our Health Minister, with the Advanced Education Minister and with the minister responsible for jobs, we worked together very closely to stand up a nurse re-entry program that would focus on rural and northern health centres and making sure that internationally educated nurses in this case would be able to access a program where they could get curriculum, practicum and work placement in health centres.

So I worked with folks like the mayor of Russell, Judy Snitynsky, to let them know about this program that we were doing and inviting municipal leaders there to find out where their internationally educated nurses were so they could enter this nurse re-entry program. I worked with the mayor of Minnedosa, Ken Cameron, and he gathered a group of other reeves and councillors and other community leaders in the health centres so that we could talk about how we could locate these internationally educated nurses and get them to participate in this nurse re-entry program.

If the internationally educated nurses who, you know, failed—quote, unquote—to get their accreditation were from these regions, they could take the actual

nurse re-entry program and then after that stay in the program and then be able to work here.

It's very relevant to these folks, especially from the town of Shoal Lake. I was working with Merv Starzyk and so that we could make sure that we could find internationally educated nurses in his region so that they could also be able to participate in the nurse re-entry program and then be able to work in these rural regions.

I worked with the CEO of Salem house, which is in Winkler, to find more internationally educated nurses. Those educated nurses were already working in personal-care homes—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Once again, I would ask the member to please make her comments relevant to the resolution before us this morning, which is dealing primarily with 911 services.

**MLA Marcelino:** You know, even the member opposite was mentioning that one of the reasons why we are having such a difficult time with our emergency services was because of the lack of staffing. The member opposite, he discussed the fact that—he was saying that we were closing emergency rooms—which is not true; we're actually opening them—due to lack of staffing. He mentioned that in his previous comments.

And I am trying to indicate that one of the ways that we're going to be improving rural and emergency services, whether it's in municipalities like the regions that he's representing in Interlake or up north, we have to have a very vibrant health human resource strategy, and that's exactly what we're doing, even as far away as what seems to be an Immigration Department. We're still doing our part to make sure that we're increasing the health human resources strategy.

And in my last 27 seconds, what kind of Health minister—or, sorry, what kind of Labour Minister would I be if I didn't mention the fact that members opposite, 28 years ago in 1997, privatized MTS. They privatized MTS because they thought that, you know, that this would be better for our rural emergency services.

We know that there were job—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain):** I just wanted to add a few words on this important resolution that the member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson) has put forward here.

It was the importance of the 911 and the integration of our ambulances and dispatching is so vital to rural Manitoba. Lot of times and especially in Turtle Mountain when the NDP cut—shut down, back in the Selinger days, shut down almost 20 rural ERs and five of them were in my—close to my other—in my constituency or just outside the constituency.

So the importance—but I want to put some facts on the record here. You know, the thing is, the member for—the Immigration Minister said that we cut ambulance services and stuff like that. You know, Honourable Speaker, what it is, is that right now we've always had money in our government for ambulances, for paramedics, but the problem was we have a lot of people retiring in the health-care system and the thing is, a lot of that time is trying to recruit paramedics, back in the day, when we were in government.

And right now, the situation has actually gotten worse, Honourable Speaker. Apparently, you know, right now, we found when—even in our government, we actually had issues with paramedics coming to Winnipeg because they were paying a lot better in Winnipeg. They also had more on-call services that they had—used their abilities to, what they were trained for, so the city was actually more attractive for a lot of our paramedics.

The paramedics right now in rural Manitoba, there is definitely a gap between what paramedics get in rural Manitoba versus paramedics that get paid in the city of Winnipeg. So, of course you're going to attract the best of the best when it comes to the city of Winnipeg, here. So that's a challenge that we have, Honourable Speaker.

So the 911 importance to make sure that all these calls get through—I remember when I first ran as an MLA for Arthur-Virden, I remember in my southwest corner—and I'd still represent that in Turtle Mountain, Pierson area cell service was really bad. And the fact is thanks to our oil industry, our economic development in the region, services, cell services have improved greatly. And we want to thank the oil industry for advocating for that.

But at the same time, we also had Bell MTS, you know, they put a number of towers in the days of—so that, we want to make sure that we get services in the area.

I remember one time in Turtle Mountain, we—I remember in Turtle Mountain there was a cell service that—Bell MTS was going to put a cell service in Turtle Mountain and I remember it was going to be

in Lake George and it was in people's backyards. And the funny thing was they did not—they want the cell tower in the area, but they didn't want it in their backyard and they actually fought Bell MTS for having us put this tower in and the next thing you know, they cancelled it. And now there's no cell tower and now they're crying that they want a cell tower.

So I always say that, you know, that's basically First World problems that we make—that we face here in Manitoba sometimes when we actually could've had a cell tower, especially when that economic development area of Turtle Mountain, when you have tourism that goes to the International Peace Garden, it would've been great to have great cell service there, especially when it comes to emergency services in that region.

So, Honourable Speaker, it's important that we really put this resolution forward here, how important it is to allow ones and especially to the Switzer 'flamy,' who actually had—lost a loved one. And that happens to a lot of families in rural Manitoba. Lot of people, especially in the Melita area, in that southwest corner, they're concerned. Melita's not always opened. They have reduced services. They sometimes have—go to Virden or Killarney, sometimes Deloraine, Boissevain. It's sort of, right now, unpredictable what ERs are open in that Highway 3 corridor.

So it's so important that we continue to advocate for cell service, for rural paramedics and when it comes to ER closures too. So it's important that—our cell service is very vital.

I want to thank the member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson) for bringing this forward here because it does affect—I know—some of my other colleagues actually asked questions; one from Swan River—colleague from Swan River, and my colleague from—not Lavalliere [*phonetic*]/La Vérendrye.

\* (11:10)

Basically, we're all in these little gaps where there's a lot—cell service are issues. So I just want to make sure that I put a few words on there, and, again, I just wanted to correct the Minister of Immigration when she said that we cut paramedic services. We didn't.

We actually increased health care. When it came from budget after budget, we increased health-care services. And especially when it comes to paramedics.

But the problem right now, and they're facing it right now, Honourable Speaker, is that paramedics

are—there's a lot more retiring than there is actually coming in the pipeline.

So it's important that the focus on education, when it comes to training paramedics, it's so vital that we continue focusing on that in rural Manitoba because at the same time, we got to look at the—when it comes to the pay. You know, when it comes to pay paramedics in the city of Winnipeg versus paramedics in rural Manitoba.

In some ways, we have to treat our paramedics like the North. Sometimes we might have to pay them remote pay. And so this is why it's so important that I want to put a few words on the record, and I would give the opportunity for other members to speak on this resolution.

### House Business

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** On House business, please, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Opposition House Leader, on House business.

**Mr. Johnson:** Honourable Speaker, pursuant to rule 34(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Lakeside (Mr. King). And the title of this resolution is Removing Retail Sales Tax on the Construction and Sale of Homes.

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 34(8), that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Lakeside. And the title of the resolution is Removing Retail Sales Tax on the Construction and Sale of Homes.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Tuxedo (MLA Compton)—honourable member for Transcona.

**MLA Shannon Corbett (Transcona):** Again, our deepest condolences to the Switzer family. Again, we on this side believe that no one should ever have to go through this tragedy, and so, again, our deepest condolences to the family.

The member opposite talked about being—the residents in rural areas being tired. I have to say, we're tired of cleaning up their messes. That's what we feel like we're doing. We're just cleaning up after the PC government.

Every Manitoban deserves equal and reliable access to emergency services, no matter where they live. When rural Manitobans call 911, they shouldn't have to worry about whether they'll get through to an operator or not.

We believe this to our very core, and that's why we are working with communities to fix the mess that was left for this government.

So I just want to put a few words on the record, and I appreciate this opportunity. So if we do a little walk down memory lane, when it comes to reliable emergency services, the members opposite have no leg to stand on.

During their seven and a half years in government, they devastated our emergency services through their endless cuts, freezes and firings. In 2017, the members opposite took emergency services away from rural Manitobans—their own constituents—by shuttering more than a dozen rural EMS stations. And that's from the CBC, July 2017.

This brought rural EMS stations in Manitoba down to only 72 active stations, compared to the previous 92. During the members' opposite time in government, they never made any move to increase cell service so that Manitobans can reliably access emergency services in rural areas.

Right now, our government is working in conjunction with the federal government to improve cell service in both rural and northern areas. And again, that's from the CBC, April 2024.

In 2021, the former failed PC government contracted Xplore to introduce cellphone and Internet services to rural and remote areas of Manitoba. But their privatization agenda failed thousands of Manitobans as Xplore stopped work to implement service with Hydro due to a payment dispute. Again, that's from April 2023.

On top of that, Xplornet was sued by a woman in Manitoba due to what she called poor connectivity and misleading sales tactics. That's from the CBC, February 2023. The better bureau of business was also investigating them due to a pattern of complaints resulting from their poor practices, including failing to install reliable service towers in a rural location. That's what our former PC government—that's what they tried to do, is give shoddy service to the rural and northern areas.

In December 2021, ambulances were reported out of service for over 19,000 hours, with some rural



regions experiencing up to a 35 per cent increase in emergency care wait times over three years. I'm going to repeat that: over 19,000 hours some rural areas were without ambulance service.

They shut down emergency rooms in communities such as Pine Falls, Melita and Treherne. Those were closed, and services reduced—were reduced in areas like Altona and Roblin.

Cuts and abandonment of rural health care and ER closures continued under their watch. Rural paramedics, ambulance wait times led to overworked and burnt-out workers.

In 2017, the members opposite cut \$4.2 million to a program that recruited doctors to work in rural communities. They also cut 62 positions across rural areas in '17-18.

Despite their promises, the PCs continued to close rural emergency rooms and rural EMS stations, and that's from the Winnipeg Free Press, March 2023. The cuts continued their whole reign, their whole—the whole time in office.

In 2019, the previous failed PC government cut 75 nursing seats at Red River while spending tens of millions—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. If I could ask the member to 'brease' bring her comments back to 911 service. That's the basis of what this resolution is about.

**MLA Corbett:** My apologies. And I'm just trying to pick up on what our Minister of Immigration was talking about in terms of recruiting people to rural areas to support our communities so that they had equal access to health services.

So—and in 2019, the PCs privatized Lifelight, which left physicians and MGEU upset and concerned about access to care in rural Manitoba.

So the problems accessing reliable emergency services as a whole, which includes access to 911 services in rural Manitoba, of the PCs' endless cuts, freezes and firings that failed emergency services in Manitoba.

One thing does not work in isolation; they all need to work together so the access to services, to have health care also is included with—at being able to access 911.

Carberry's health centre's emergency room was forced to close in August of 2023 due to staffing

shortages, sending parents—patients to either Brandon or Winnipeg.

Again, when you think about access to health-care services, it includes calls to 911 as well as being able to access the emergency services. If you have a longer time to get to an emergency room, that impacts your health care.

When we look at the other emergency rooms that were closed—Teulon, Winnipegosis, Shoal Lake have also been closed indefinitely for years as a result of the failed PC government's planning.

\* (11:20)

Leaf Rapids Health Centre emergency room had to close in July 2022 due to staffing shortages. Both Melita and Morris had to close their emergency rooms in September of 2023.

Again, when you look at the wrap-around support of emergency services, this is all included in how we access emergency services.

During the third wave of the pandemic, Manitoba's health system collapsed under the PC government. They sent 57 ICU patients out of the province for care due to lack of capacity, which again, comes back to your whole emergency service wrap-around support.

Their failures led to 12 of these patients died—dying while being transferred out of province to receive care. They kept outsourcing care, causing irreparable harm to Manitobans, keeping them in the dark about their actual capacity.

The members opposite continually showed that they didn't care about getting timely, quality and reliable emergency services to rural Manitobans. Their cuts, freezes, firings and poor decisions left Manitobans in limbo as they waited for someone to answer their calls.

We are trying to answer those calls. We are a listening government—we are a listening government. We are working with communities to understand the impact of what has happened for—what happened for seven and a half years of cuts.

We are working as a team, not just in isolation with each department, but our ministers work together so that we have a wrap-around support for emergency services as a whole.

While the members opposite did their best to disrupt reliable emergency services, we've been hard at work trying to clean up the mess that they left. In Budget 2025, we've made several improvements to

the public health-care system that would ensure greater access to emergency services in rural Manitoba.

As part of our work to create more paramedic positions, we're investing \$458,790 to create 16 additional training seats at University College of the North. This will help with access to emergency services, to create safer neighbourhoods across the province, especially in rural areas—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips):** It's an honour to rise today.

First of all, every Manitoban deserves equal access to health care across Manitoba, regardless of where they live. That is something we campaigned on; that is something that we're delivering on as a government.

And I got to say, once again, sitting in the Chamber this morning, listening to the opposition put forth a revisionist history. It's sort of like if an arson sets fire to a house, returns back to the scene of the crime and chastises the firefighter for not doing a good job putting out the fire.

And that's what we have to come and see day in and day out in this Chamber with these resolutions with health care. I see the member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook) is here, too. As some point, she's got to turn around and tell her members, stop talking about health care, our record on this is abysmal, it is catastrophically bad—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I would just remind members that referencing whether a member is present or absent is not allowed by our rules.

**MLA Devgan:** Thank you, Honourable Speaker. My apologies.

Earlier on, the member—the government House leader made some comments that were disparaging about the member for Tuxedo (MLA Compton), a former and current—still, front-line worker in our health-care system; my colleague from Waverley, also a front-line service provider in our health-care system, in emergency services. Both have experienced firsthand the devastating cuts that the members opposite have made to the health-care system. Both have a good sense of what is needed to repair the damage that they've done, not members opposite. You know, you can't come into this Chamber and say: we broke it, you fix it.

And that's what we're subjected to day in and day out in here, but you know what? Manitobans are smart. Manitobans know which government, which party, who in this House is fighting for them; is fighting to repair the damage that they've done to the health-care system. But, Honourable Speaker, it speaks to a lack of morality and a lack of credibility.

Yesterday, we heard about some really, really serious, serious—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I would ask the member to keep his comments relevant to the resolution we're discussing here this morning.

**MLA Devgan:** Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for your guidance.

I think what the—what I'm trying to illustrate here is where the opposite members are trying to revise history around their own cuts and their past behaviours; behaviours that, according to the Ethics Commissioner, were in violation of the Constitution, violation of the democratic will of Manitobans.

So those members have zero credibility coming to this Chamber and telling us to—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I've asked the member to keep his comments relevant to the resolution and I need to ask him to keep them relevant yet again.

And now the time being—when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for McPhillips will have seven minutes remaining.

## **DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS**

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

**The Speaker:** The hour being 11:55 a.m., in accordance with rule 24(7), I'm interrupting proceedings to proceed with the deferred division that was requested during last Tuesday's private members' business, on second reading of Bill 208, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

### **Recorded Vote**

**The Speaker:** Accordingly, call in the members.

So the question before the House is second reading of Bill 208, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

**Division**

*A RECORDED VOTE* was taken, the result being as follows:

**Ayes**

*Asagwara, Balcaen, Bereza, Blashko, Brar, Bushie, Byram, Chen, Compton, Cook, Corbett, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Goertzen, Guenter, Hiebert, Johnson, Kennedy, Khan, King, Kostyshyn, Lagassé, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Narth, Naylor, Nesbitt, Oxenham, Pankratz, Piwniuk, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Schuler, Simard, Stone, Wiebe, Wowchuk.*

**Deputy Clerk (Mr. Tim Abbott):** Ayes 48, Nays 0.

\* (11:30)

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion accordingly passed.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** What's the will of the House? *[interjection]*

The hour being 12 o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 today—recessed, not adjourned; my mistake. The House is recessed until 1:30 today.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 22, 2025

## CONTENTS

<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b>		Questions	
<b>PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS</b>		Compton	2301
		Johnson	2301
<b>Concurrence and Third Readings—Public Bills</b>		Narh	2301
Bill 232—The Victims of Impaired Drivers		Piwniuk	2301
Commemoration Day Act (Commemoration of		Pankratz	2301
Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)		Wowchuk	2302
Balcaen	2293	Debate	
Loiselle	2294	Marcelino	2303
Bereza	2297	Piwniuk	2304
Fontaine	2297	Corbett	2306
		Devgan	2308
<b>Resolutions</b>		<b>Debate on Second Readings—Public Bills</b>	
Res. 17—Ensuring Reliable Emergency Services		Bill 208—The Manitoba Small Business Month Act	
in Rural Manitoba		(Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act	
Johnson	2298	Amended)	2308

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