



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALTOMARE, Nello, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
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	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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 27, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 209—The Celebration of Philippine Independence Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): I move, seconded by the member for Burrows (Mr. Brar), that Bill 209, The Celebration of Philippine Independence Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended); Loi sur la Journée de la célébration de l'indépendance des Philippines (modification de la Loi sur les journées, les semaines et les mois commémoratifs), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Burrows—or, for Radisson.

MLA Dela Cruz: Honourable Speaker, I rise today to introduce Bill 209, which will celebrate June 12 as Philippine independence day in Manitoba. This bill

gives us all the opportunity to acknowledge our commonality, our empowerment and our right as human beings to independence.

This bill brings educational attention directly to the journey of Filipino peoples to independence, and in Manitoba's diaspora, education gives us strength.

It's with this strength that we tackle the big things that we can't do alone.

Mga kapuwa ko, malaya tayo; my friends, we are free.

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

Committee reports?

Tabling of reports?

Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Measures to Combat Inflation

MLA Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Manitobans know that inflation impacts everyone's quality of life. That's where we are lowering your bills. We lowered your gas bills for a full year. As promised, we are now planning to freeze hydro rates for a full year starting in 2025.

Earlier this year, we drove down inflation rates down to the lowest in the country. Our unemployment rate has improved to the third lowest in the country. We are planning to stop anti-competitive contracts and make groceries more—that make groceries more expensive.

This spring, our new homeowner affordability tax credit will give homeowners up to \$1,500 in relief. Our new tax credit for rental housing construction will create more affordable housing.

Provincial governments across the country have limited tools to fight inflation. That hasn't stopped your Manitoba NDP government from taking innovative measures to fight inflation in 2024, and we'll do the same in 2025, because the fight against inflation must continue.

Fighting inflation is the most important thing we can do to make life more affordable for Manitobans.

Paige Procter

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, today I rise to recognize Paige Procter, who founded the Coffeehouse to End Cancer fundraising concert 14 years ago to honour dear family friends Gord Harris and his dad, Grandpa Jim, both beloved members of our community, and her Auntie Dot.

At just 16 years old, she had had enough of cancer. She was witnessing the effects it was having on some very special people in her life. She wanted to find a way to fight back and thought fundraising for CancerCare Manitoba Foundation could help make a difference.

Paige contacted the foundation and spoke with a community events team member who helped her identify how to turn her love of music into a fundraising event. Her big idea was to bring young performers together at the Grosse Isle community hall, serve coffee, tea and dainties and encourage donations. She called it Coffeehouse to End Cancer.

On its inaugural night on August 31, 2011, more than \$6,500 was raised. Every year since 2013, Paige set new and higher goals and exceeded them with an army of volunteers and community support. With the growth of the event, she had to move it from the community hall to the Hitch 'n Post and now is an outdoor event at the picturesque Grosse Isle Heritage Site.

Through Paige's dedication to this event and her following of inspired volunteers and fundraisers who called—collect pledges and online donations, they have raised close to \$300,000 for the foundation.

She graduated high school, completed a demanding three-year nursing program, established her career as a nurse and has given back to the community in so many ways.

Most recently, Paige received a civil division meritorious service 'derecoration' conferred by Governor General Mary Simon. This award recognizes great Canadians for exceptional deeds accomplished over a limited time that bring honour to our country.

Paige was also honoured to be recognized for her work by the Association of Fundraising Professionals as the recipient of the 2019 Emerging Leader in Philanthropy Award by The Winnipeg Foundation.

Paige is now a pediatric nurse, mother of three-month-old son Paul and is already in the planning stages of their 15th annual Coffeehouse to End Cancer.

Colleagues, please join me in recognizing Paige Procter, who joins us today in the gallery with her son Paul, and mother Jo-Anne.

Brent Wery

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): In January of 2023, we mourned the loss of Brent Wery, a firefighter, a community volunteer, a councillor of the RM of Ste. Anne.

He was involved in many communities and was always happy spending his time in and out about these communities, making them better places to live and bringing folks together.

He was also a son, a father, a brother, a friend. Quite simply, Brent was a hero.

Brent's mother, Dale Wery, came up with an idea for an extreme puzzle competition in Richer. With the help of his father, Robert, siblings Sonya, Brad and Scott, along with their parents, they hosted the event, which brought together 15 teams of puzzle buffs at the Richer Young at Hearts Club.

The Wery family was able to raise over \$2,200 through registration fees, puzzle sales and donations. All proceeds are going to the Brent Wery bursary fund.

* (13:40)

After the event, Sonya stated in an interview: In honour of the things that he's done to advance the community that he has resided in his whole life and the duration of that is just something to keep his spirit alive and just honour him for everything he's contributed in his short amount of time with us.

Today, I stand here proud to have known Brent and offer my deepest condolences to his friends, his family and his colleagues. Today and every day, I will remember who Brent was and what value he brought to our communities that will live on forever.

Thank you to the Wery family for hosting such a fun community event, to bring folks together and honouring your brother in such a beautiful way.

I ask for leave for a moment of silence to honour the memory of Brent Wery.

The Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence as the member requested? [*Agreed*]

A moment of silence was observed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Municipal Policing Costs Government Intention

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, yesterday, the Premier once again showed municipal leaders that he's all talk and no action on values, and his values change with the tide.

Yesterday, he pulled a one-eighty and told leaders that he was in support of working with municipalities to staff up the RCMP, despite the fact that his actions have shown otherwise.

In 2023, he and his entire caucus voted against calling on the federal government to work with municipalities to cover cost increases from the RCMP collective agreement.

I ask the Premier today why it took him a year and a half to get on team Manitoba, and what changed his mind and realize that he was wrong.

Will he stand up today and admit to Manitobans and municipalities that he was wrong?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Members opposite were bad for law enforcement. They were bad for crime in Manitoba, and they completely ignored the unfolding addictions crisis.

We see the evidence of that, unfortunately, each and every day across the province. We talk to Manitobans. They know that we're working hard for them. In fact, people across the province want to see us invest in tackling the causes of crime, but also to ensure that there's a strong law enforcement-driven response completely absent in areas like Swan River and Brandon during Heather Stefanson's failed time in office. But today, there's a general investigative unit in Swan River, and there's a \$2-million increase to funding for police in Brandon.

We know that there is much more to do, but the biggest risk to public safety in Manitoba is if the PCs were ever to get back in office.

Good thing, though: We're working hard for you, the people of Manitoba. We're delivering on law and order. We're delivering on public safety. We're delivering on a brighter future for young people in every corner of this wonderful province.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, Manitobans are telling us that they feel unsafe today than they did 14 months ago. So, shame on this Premier for not standing and apologizing in his place.

I want to quote the Minister of Public Service Delivery (MLA Sandhu) from the debate, Honourable Speaker. I quote: Municipalities were not meaningfully consulted during these negotiations, despite being paying contract partners. The federal government's unwillingness to absorb the cost will directly result in a significant property tax increase, delayed infrastructure projects and other cost-cutting measures to the detrimental of local communities. End quote.

Honourable Speaker, clearly, the NDP understood the issue, knew the consequences and still voted against it.

How does the Premier justify saying one thing to municipal leaders and doing the opposite in this very Chamber, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Kinew: Each and every day, I'm so honoured to come to work with this wonderful team that's working hard for you, the people of Manitoba.

There's an optimism when we visit rural communities, when we visit cities across the province, when we visit the North, when we visit First Nations. People are proud and happy of the Manitoba that we are rebuilding together.

Of course, the fact that we have to engage in this rebuilding project is because of the cuts that we saw under Heather Stefanson and the members opposite. Today, they want to invoke the assembly—or, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, yet during their time in office, year after year after year, they froze the funding.

Municipal leaders from that member's own constituency made the case that you can't pay for 2023 services with 2016 dollars, so apparently, on their march to drive themselves into opposition, they started to listen to municipal leaders. But here's the thing: We've been listening the whole time.

That's why we entered into office with a strong plan to work with municipalities—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, it's a shame that the Premier couldn't be bothered to show up and actually

listen to some AMM municipal reps late last night. They had lots to say.

The Premier once again has just empty words, whether it's fiction and creative liberties that he passes off as a ghostwritten biography, or fiction that he spews on the stage at AMM, Manitobans know this Premier well enough that he'll say anything to anyone if he thinks it's popular. His opinion changes every time he walks through a door, it seems. Different audience, different convictions, same Premier.

When will this Premier agree that he and his party were wrong in 2023? Honourable Speaker, the matter is of vital importance to municipalities and not as the NDP member—as an NDP member had once said in this Chamber, I quote: That—some nonsense that this government is introducing. End quote.

Will he stand up and again apologize for his behaviour as himself and his NDP caucus—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Mr. Kinew: It would take a member of the PC caucus to understand what was going on in that question. Nobody in the rest of the province ever understands what they are trying to spit out during their limited time here in question period.

So, on the subject of municipal leadership, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Kathy Valentino on her election as the AMM president. We were all very proud to meet with her over the past few days. And I also want to congratulate Brad Saluk and Scott Phillips as the newly elected vice-presidents of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities.

Well, we know that the members opposite during their time in office were criticized by municipal leaders for trying to operate in 2023 with 2016 dollars. Who is it who made that devastating critique of the members opposite? Newly elected vice-president Brad Saluk.

I'll table the documents that offer the proof.

Municipal Grants and Programs Funding Commitment Inquiry

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, I also would like to congratulate Kathy Valentino on her election as president of AMM, as well as Brad Saluk and Scott Phillips in their being elected to the role of vice-presidents.

I'd also like to thank all of the municipal representatives that let their names stand for election and serve their communities. Having spent eight years as

an AMM district representative for the Interlake, I'm very familiar with the demands and rewards of the role.

The AMM members have strong opinions this week on the Building Sustainable Communities and Green Team cuts.

Honourable Speaker, will this minister work to address their specific concerns over cuts?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to also take this opportunity to give some props to the minister for municipal relations. Just some two weeks into the job, he was able to meet with municipal leaders and to share a very important message, something that they had been hungry for for many years, something that they've only heard in the year 2023 and 2024, and that is that you have a provincial government that listens.

I was very humbled also—I was very humbled and happy also to meet with municipal leaders and to share the good news that we're funding them to an additional \$62 million. That's on top of the 2 per cent escalator that we've already committed to.

So, the member opposite says he understands municipal leaders. Perhaps he would like to weigh in on this fact that municipal leaders are rejoicing on over this week: a 2 per cent escalator plus \$62 million is way more than the zeros they got under the—

* (13:50)

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Lakeside, on a supplementary question.

Mr. King: The recently announced new funding for municipalities isn't new at all. In fact, it matches almost dollar for dollar the cuts this government made to the Building Sustainable Communities and Green Team programs this spring.

This isn't even an example of stealing from Peter to pay Paul, it's stealing from Peter to pay Peter later, and hoping Peter doesn't notice. But boy, did Peter notice.

Will the minister break with NDP tradition and admit there is no new money for municipalities?

Mr. Kinew: You know, the talking points that are handed to the member by somebody who couldn't even win a nomination contest in the constituency of Tuxedo are deeply flawed.

The preamble begins with the recognition that this is new funding. Thank you, member opposite, for

acknowledging the 62 million new dollars that we are funding to municipalities.

This, of course, is on top of the 2 per cent escalator on the operating grants, 2 per cent escalator on the infrastructures funding and an additional 2 per cent escalator when it comes to policing services across the province.

Again, we know that the investments that we're making alongside municipal leaders are going to make a difference for you, the people of Manitoba. The only people who are not embracing this bright future that we are building together, it's the members opposite.

But that's okay. They can continue to caucus with themselves while we build Manitoba together.

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

Mr. King: The minister, clearly a big fan of Animal Farm. He's trying to convince municipalities that they have more when in fact they have less. He took away over \$16 million a year from their pockets only to turn around, give back \$12.4 million, which by his math is more. Manitoba math says otherwise.

Will this minister toss aside his smooth guidebook and make decisions that reflect the reality of the challenges faced by Manitoba municipalities?

Mr. Kinew: Well, I want to thank the member opposite and his new-found discovery of literature, because not only does it allow us to remind municipal leaders about the additional funding that we're providing with the One Manitoba Growth Revenue Fund, not only does it allow us to talk about the 2 per cent escalator on operating grants, the 2 per cent escalator on infrastructure, the 2 per cent investment when it comes to policing services, but it reminds us also that we boosted funding for libraries across the province of Manitoba.

So thank you so much for the reminder. Again, the members opposite engage in Orwellian double-speak every single day when they come in here and attack the victims of serial killers and then claim to care about public safety. We, on the other hand, we're in for inspirational literature. We love those positive authors, and the most positive author that I can think of: the people of Manitoba, for authoring the shared destiny that we are writing together.

We are so honoured to work with you each and every day.

US Tariffs on Agriculture Producers Impact on Manitoba Economy

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, yesterday I was alarmed to hear the minister make light of the potential impacts of a 25 per cent US tariff.

According to the Department of Agriculture last year, Manitoba shipped over 4 and a half billion dollars in agri-food exports to the United States. This minister needs to address the elephant in the room or potential hit to the hog industry of \$1.13 billion.

What is this minister doing to ensure producers and processors are confident in his leadership?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): It's always entertaining to talk about agriculture and the great work this government does.

We have been in constant communication with Manitoba Pork, Manitoba Beef Producers and all organizations such as the Keystone Agriculture Producers 'organie'.

And let me remind members opposite when Jill Verway, the president, went with the team of Manitoba down on the US delegation trade mission, and her commentary was: This looks very positive of our trade mission that we've just went through, and we see great things happening in this province of Manitoba.

So I think we have done our due diligence, and we will continue to work on behalf of the agriculture producers and the economy that it prides—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

MLA Bereza: Yesterday, I spoke of the impact of a 25 per cent US tariff on pork. Today I'd like to highlight canola, which is valued at \$2.8 billion, or approximately 4 per cent of the Manitoba's GDP. Of that, 60 per cent, or \$1.73 billion is going to the US. Producers need to know the minister understands they're worried about their operations and their families.

Can the minister explain, in regards to exports, what this government is doing to safeguard the Manitoba businesses that rely on these exports?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I'd love to inform the member opposite, the day the announcement was made about potential China was going raise some tariffs, I made

the contact to the agriculture minister of Alberta, the agriculture minister of Ontario and also the agriculture minister of Saskatchewan.

Shortly after that, we had a conference call and we decided we're going to stay together, work together, for the betterment of the canola industry in Canada, not only in the province of Manitoba.

And I'm very proud to say we also sent a letter to the federal agriculture minister in support of their understanding that we need to work with the federal government and all other agriculture ministers across Canada, for the benefit of the canola industry—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

MLA Bereza: Honourable Speaker, just a couple things I'd like to bring up is the 25 per cent tariff was the US talking about it. And the other thing, too, is just to let the member across from me know there is a postal strike going on right now.

Honourable Speaker, this Premier dismantled economic development efforts his first day in office, and only now is justifiably worried about the recession. He's shown no leadership. Agriculture drives the Manitoba GDP, and the lion's share are exported to the US.

What does this Premier say to Manitoba farmers who demand to know what he will do about this assault on Manitobans' economic drivers?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): We work hard each and every day to ensure that Ag will continue to be the backbone of our economy for generations to come. That includes standing up against one Donald Trump.

A Donald Trump who, for two days now, goes unnamed by the members opposite. And I would say to them: You have a real problem if you can't even speak the name of the person who is proposing the policy that you're trying to then critique.

Again, while they're caught in some limbo about trying to court support in some quarters of the province, we are here standing up for all Manitobans. We'll stand up for Ag when it comes to these 25 per cent tariffs.

But I would say there was one other thing missing from the members' opposite question: Why didn't he also invoke Animal Farm as his colleague did, so that we could hear the Minister of Ag give the people what they want and say, Animal Farm, Animal Farm, we're

freezing rent payments for Crown lands for one more year?

Provincial Road 227 Future of Paving Upgrade

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Several of my colleagues have asked the question of the minister. These questions stem from concerns brought forward by municipalities.

One road of great concern to several municipalities and constituencies is PR 227, 72 kilometres of 227 from Highway 16 to Highway 6 was to be paved and brought up to RTAC standards.

Until very recently, this project was going ahead, until the minister's surprise announcement that they were cutting it. The minister's absence from AMM Bear Pit spoke volumes without saying a word.

Would the minister be willing to provide a comprehensive list of all planned MTI projects that they intend to cut?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): It's—it speaks volumes that the members opposite ask questions and don't actually listen to the answer, because I answered in actual detail to that exact question last week.

So I'm not going to waste anyone else's time with it. What I am going to say is that there was no announcement.

There were one-on-one meetings with the affected municipalities. I've had a hundred one-on-one meetings with municipalities over the past year. There are many new requests and I look forward to continue building the strong relationships that I've already established in the year ahead.

* (14:00)

The Speaker: The honourable member for Interlake-Gimli, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Johnson: Honourable Speaker, the paving of PR 227 must be the linchpin of Manitoba's trade and commerce grid initiative, an initiative to bring great economic development, reduce transportation costs and to provide transportation alternatives for rural municipalities.

The cutting of PR two twenty-two—227 is a prime example of this government's disregard for the well-being and interests of RMs and their residents.

I'd like to give the minister the opportunity today to follow the lead of some of her colleagues and reverse this detrimental decision.

Will they do that today?

MLA Naylor: You know, one of the great challenges, great privileges and honours of being a Cabinet minister is navigating really large budgets and really big problems and big challenges across a huge province with many, many people affected by decisions that we make.

And that is why we have been such a strong listening government, why I have taken seriously the voices of people affected by our decisions. And at the end of the day the grown-ups sit down at the table and figure out which project makes the most sense, at which time, within that budget, something that side of the House was never able to achieve effectively.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Interlake-Gimli, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Johnson: A cut is a cut, whether it's behind closed doors or an announcement; the minister knows this well. The PR 227 project was valued at \$70 million. Now, I'm willing to say, given the recent history of this government, I'm guessing that in the not-too-distant future, this minister will be standing proudly announcing a new \$70-million project, perhaps to pave two—PR 227.

Will this minister simply announce today that will—they will be reinstalling the PR 227 paving project?

MLA Naylor: The member opposite forgets that his side of the House hasn't been in government for a very long time now, and he doesn't understand that that—he's referring to a project that escalated in price to over \$120 million.

That is a substantial fraction of the \$500-million highways capital budget, and we are doing a project on that highway to restore, to address, some of the concerns that are there, and it will be an in-budget project that makes sense for that part of the province.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

North End Sewage Treatment Plant Upgrades Project Completion Concerns

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Speaker, this week Manitobans learned this NDP government dismantled the provincial municipal task force responsible for ensuring the North End Sewage Treatment Plant is completed by 2030. This task force brought together elected officials and industry experts

to explore cost-effective solutions to provide a clear road map for completing this critical project. Yet, as our former government stated before, the NDP has left the public in the dark and the project on an unsustainable trajectory. Even Winnipeg's mayor has called this a crisis moment.

How does this Environment Minister justify eliminating this task force when it was key to delivering solutions for one of our province's most pressing environmental challenges?

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): Our government is making progress on things that matter to Manitobans. We are fixing health care, we are making life more affordable, and we are making our communities safer.

We are also actively working to move the NEWPCC project forward, and I look forward to sharing more information in my next answer.

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

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, the people of Winnipeg, and especially the residents of Rossmere, deserve answers, not excuses, from their government. They expect their Environment Minister to work with municipalities to protect our waterways, not to pollute them further.

Now that we know the NDP has dismantled this task force, what steps is this minister taking to ensure the North End treatment plant will meet the 2030 provincial deadline? Will the minister guarantee that Manitobans won't see further cost overruns and delays?

MLA Sandhu: We are going to get the NEWPCC project done. Our team is at the table with the City of Winnipeg. We are advocating to the federal government and we will get this project done so that we can grow the economy, build more housing, protect our Winnipeg lake and future generations.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Mr. Nesbitt: The North End plant is critical for protecting Lake Winnipeg and supporting growth in the city of Winnipeg. Every delay increases costs for taxpayers and hurts Manitoba's economy. But instead of showing leadership, this minister eliminated the task force at the same time she was slashing budgets for environmental approvals, water stewardship and the Water Services Board.

How can this minister stand in her place and defend these decisions when they only add to the economic and environmental destruction Manitobans are facing due to their negligence?

MLA Sandhu: The Heather Stefanson PCs had seven years to get this project done but they failed. All they could do is pick fights with other levels of governments. Besides, clearly after the Throne Speech, instead of talking about Manitobans' priorities, they're talking about themselves. Where they failed, we will get it done.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Manitoba Municipalities Authority to Modify Speed Zones

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): As today wraps up the AMM convention in Winnipeg, we, on this side of the House, have been hearing loud and clear from municipal leaders that this Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation is failing to come to the table and work with them. Many have raised their concerns about unnecessary delays when they need speed zones altered on provincial roads in urban areas.

Does the minister think the current system appropriately serves Manitobans or does she admit it's failing Manitobans?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I'm very curious. If the member opposite even knows what the current system is, but I want to make sure Manitobans do know. When a municipality is entrusted in increasing, decreasing speed zones, there is an application process through the department. So municipalities can avail themselves of that and, obviously, I've also had conversations with municipalities in meetings, but we also walk them through the appropriate process that gets them in that queue for those evaluations.

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

Mr. Narth: Well, all talk and no action. I'd like to inform the minister, after 12 years of serving on municipal council, I think that I have a fairly significant understanding of the system.

We know that this minister and this government's biggest priority is maintaining and existing the bureaucracy that is needlessly clogging up the system and leaving municipalities waiting far longer than they needed to. We all know that with political will, the system can move quickly so why does this minister lack the will to champion those changes?

MLA Naylor: It's fascinating to me when relatively new members of the folks on the other side of the House are complaining. They're so excited to be here and to complain about the things that were really upsetting them for the last seven and a half years under the previous government. And I hear it time and time again. They finally get that opportunity to speak.

We are continually reviewing our systems, working closely with municipalities to get these things right.

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

Mr. Narth: The comments that I'm hearing aren't just hearsay, as we've spoken to many municipalities through the AMM convention as well as my own constituency, the many communities throughout it.

Municipalities throughout the entire western region have come together and drafted a resolution for the AMM to lobby the government to change the authority to municipalities.

* (14:10)

And I table that for the minister.

Municipalities throughout Manitoba are united. Decisions that impact residents' safety should be made locally, not here on Broadway.

Will the minister commit today to cutting the red tape and working with municipalities to provide them the authority to make changes that they know will make the much-needed safety—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

MLA Naylor: You know, it's been such a pleasure working with municipalities this year and I want to congratulate AMM on such a successful convention this week.

And we will continue to work with folks, just as we've been working with communities on all of the new initiatives this year, whether it's the intersection improvements at 1 and 5, the refurbishment of Brandon 18th Street, whether it's our investments in Wasagamack airport, our Highway 6 rest stops; none of these things would come about without the advocacy and influence and working together in partnership with municipalities.

Selkirk Regional Health Centre Expansion of Hip and Knee Surgical Capacity

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): Our government continues to make positive progress on the task that

Manitobans elected us to do: cleaning up the deleterious mess caused by the previous PC government after seven and a half years of reckless cuts to the health-care system.

Manitobans can trust our team to get the results they expect from a government that listens and cares about health-care workers and the folks who need to access it.

Honourable Speaker, can the Minister of Health please update the House about this morning's important announcements about how our government is expanding capacity and health-care access for Manitobans who need it?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank my colleague for that incredibly important question, a timely question. Manitobans elected our government to repair the seven and a half years of damage caused by the previous PC government.

We have taken a new approach. By listening and consulting with health-care workers across the system, we're ensuring Manitobans can get the high-quality care they deserve. It's why I was so happy to be in Selkirk this morning to announce the additional 800 hip and knee surgeries at Selkirk Regional Health Centre.

Honourable Speaker, our job as government is to give surgeons the tools that they need to make the best decisions for their patients and today we're giving them the funding and the staff to do just that. This means less Manitobans are going to have to wait for a surgery date. More Manitobans get to play with—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Education Property Taxes on Farmland Request for Government to Phase Out

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Yesterday at AMM, the Minister of Finance was asked about education property tax on farmers. With rising land prices, farmers are facing even greater cost of production and tax burdens.

Under the Selinger NDP, farmers went to paying 11 per cent of the education taxes in the province prior to the PCs phasing it out. Less than 2 per cent of the population paying 11 per cent of the education property taxes: This was unfair. It squeezed out municipalities' ability to pay for services and farmer investments. The Finance Minister's answer at AMM was tone-deaf to the impacts that these taxes have on our farmers.

Will the minister commit today to continuing the phase-out of education property taxes on farmland?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Here's what we know after seven and a half years: the members opposite had a deleterious impact on farmers across Manitoba.

One of the biggest reasons for that, Honourable Speaker, is because they jacked up Crown lease rates on farmers on—in this province. They did that in a way that had a huge impact on producers, which could have downstream impacts on food costs and so forth.

We also know that they just continued to ignore the broader affordability challenges that not only farmers, but Manitobans in rural northern communities and, of course, urban communities faced for many years. We took action on that right out of the gate with our fuel tax holiday along with, last budget, 21 new ways to save. We're going to keep doing the work of making life more—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Midland, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: Farmers are now facing a 25 per cent tariff, and the fact that this Premier (Mr. Kinew) stood in response to my colleague's question and made a joke and made light of this shows that they have no clue about what the impacts of these tariffs are going to have on our exports and our provincial economy.

Farm input costs, everything from fertilizer and chemical seed are costing farmers more every single year. A rising NDP supporting carbon tax is further going to add to the tax burden on farmers and all Manitobans. The minister has now cancelled the education phase-out on property taxes.

Can the minister explain why he is so willing to maintain this out of date, antiquated, out-of-touch tax policy of education property taxes?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, we're proud of our homeowner affordability tax credit. We know that it's going to make school taxes \$1,500 cheaper for every single Manitoban.

Not only that, Honourable Speaker, but we can talk about farmers; we could talk about all Manitobans. We're making homeownership more affordable. We're making energy more affordable. We're making child care more affordable. We're making rental housing more affordable. We're making home security more affordable, and on and on and on.

Manitobans finally have a government that's listening. Led by our Premier (Mr. Kinew), this incredible team—we're going to keep doing that work of listening because we know that that's the way we can deliver on the things Manitobans want. We're going to keep fighting for greater affordability every single day.

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

Mrs. Stone: Does \$148 million in new taxes sound more affordable to Manitobans? The answer is no. Allowing 17 per cent increases in school tax divisions: does that sound more affordable to Manitobans? No. His answers yesterday on property taxes, on farmland, fell flat at AMM.

Will the minister reverse course, bring back the rebate and the phase-out of the education property tax and give farmers, municipalities and Manitobans a break from rising NDP taxes that they can expect in the future?

MLA Sala: You know what hurt Manitobans? It hurt Manitobans when the members opposite continued to find new and creative ways of jacking up energy hydro costs on Manitobans.

They continued to make life harder by increasing the cost for renters when they increased taxes on renters. They made life harder for farmers when they increased their Crown lease rates. That's their record.

What's our record, Honourable Speaker? A long list of measures that we've taken since we've come in here to make life more affordable, not just for folks living in our urban centres but for Manitobans in every corner of the province.

We're proud of that work. We're proud to bring that good message to AMM over the last few days, and we're going to keep fighting every single day for Manitobans.

Needle Distribution Harm Reduction Policy Responsibility for Used Needle Disposal

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Honourable Speaker, the AMM noted that the NDP's current needle giveaways, and I quote, do not prevent reuse or include safety features leading to improper disposal, which increases the risk of needle injuries and diseases, especially for children and vulnerable individuals.

If the minister is going to continue to hand out needles by the millions, can she do as requested by AMM and, I quote, develop a comprehensive strategy

for the management of discarded needles, or is she content to leave it for somebody else to figure out?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Honourable Speaker, we're very proud of the work that we're doing with the people of Swan River, in partnership with them.

And I know that the Minister for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness has spent time in the community, is working with the community, has issued a directive specifically around needles. But we're going a step further, Honourable Speaker. We want to stop these toxic drugs before they get into the community.

And that's why we're partnering with the community to have additional officers as part of a general investigation section that will do the kind of work that'll stop the organized crime and keep those toxic drugs out of our communities to begin with.

Affordability Crisis Request for Living Wage

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): Manitoba is in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. Not only are housing, grocery store prices becoming less and less affordable for Manitobans, Manitobans' wages haven't kept up with inflation.

Under this Premier, Manitobans are being left behind: 171,000 Manitobans earn less than a living wage. That's one in four Manitoban workers who are struggling to afford basic needs like grocery and housing. No one should work full-time and live in poverty.

Will the Premier commit to bringing in a living wage for all Manitobans?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I'm grateful to have an opportunity to speak to the important work that we're doing to make life more affordable for all Manitobans.

You know, one of the really important things that we brought forward, of course, was our school—universal school nutrition program and we know that's—we know that that's helping ensure every kid gets the right start so that they can succeed and have a full belly to start out their day.

We also recently, in our Throne Speech, of course, announced new measures, specifically our hydro rate freeze, which is going to keep energy prices more affordable, something that Manitobans suffered under the last government for seven and a half years when

they had a government that worked every single day to make hydro rates more expensive.

* (14:20)

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

Mr. Wasyliw: In the past year, food inflation in Manitoba went up 5.7 per cent. This Premier's (Mr. Kinew) salary also went up 5.7 per cent last year.

You know who didn't get a 5.7 per cent increase last year? Manitobans. One in four Manitobans earn less than a living wage and are having trouble feeding their families. This is disproportionately affecting—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —women, newcomers and young parents. A living wage would reduce child poverty—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

I can't hear the question when both sides are hollering back and forth. So I would ask the honourable member for Fort Garry to please ask his question again.

Mr. Wasyliw: In the past year, food inflation in Manitoba went up 5.7 per cent. The Premier also got a 5.7 per cent raise last year.

Manitobans did not. In fact, one in four Manitobans earn less than a living wage and are having trouble feeding their families. This disproportionately affects women, newcomers and young parents. A living wage would reduce child poverty in Manitoba. It would also reduce the gender wage gap.

This Premier has the tools to put tens of thousands of Manitobans out of poverty. Why is he failing to act?

MLA Sala: You know, it sounds as though the member opposite is concerned about affordability measures, and I would invite him to support the work that we're doing, the very good work.

Starting with the fact that we're responding—we're responding to the—we're responding to rising food prices through a measure to ban restrictive covenants, which will help to ensure groceries are more affordable.

And again, that's in addition to our fuel tax holiday, our hydro rate freeze and many, many other measures that we've taken to make life more affordable. You know what, it was a very long stretch that Manitobans had to face a day-to-day reality where they had a government that wasn't focused on their

needs, that wasn't focused on the concerns that they had.

Finally, we have a government that's focused on them. We're going to keep working every single day—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

And the time for question period has also expired.

PETITIONS

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Looking forward to everyone listening to this petition. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The federal government has mandated a consumption-based carbon tax, with the stated goal of financially pressuring Canadians to make decisions to reduce their carbon emissions.

(2) Manitoba Hydro estimates that, even with a high-efficiency furnace, the carbon tax is costing the average family over \$200 annually, even more for those with older furnaces.

Home heating in Manitoba is not a choice or a decision for Manitobans to make; it is a necessity of life, with an average of almost 200 days below 0°C annually.

(4) The federal government has selectively removed the carbon tax off of home heating oil in the Atlantic provinces of Canada, but has indicated they have no intention to provide the same relief to Manitobans heating their homes.

(5) Manitoba Hydro indicates that natural gas heating is one of the most affordable options available to Manitobans, and it can be cost prohibitive for Manitobans—for households to replace their heating source.

(6) Premiers across Canada, including in the Atlantic provinces that benefit from this decision, have collectively sent a letter to the federal government, calling on it to extend the carbon tax exemption to all forms of home heating—the exception of Manitoba.

(7) Manitoba is one of the only provincial jurisdictions to have not agreed with the stance that all Canadians' home heating bills should be exempt from the carbon tax.

(8) Provincial leadership in other jurisdictions have already committed to removing the federal carbon tax from home heating bills.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove the federal carbon tax on home heating bills for all Manitobans to provide them much-needed relief.

Honourable Speaker, this petition is signed by Chris Kovacs, Miles Eakins, Desiree Boitsan and many, many more fine Manitobans.

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Just before we hear more petitions, I would like to introduce some guests in the gallery who I believe, unfortunately, have already left.

Like to draw attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we had with us today Jaspreet Singh, Sharanjit Gill, Gurpreet Kaur, Baldev Singh, and they were guests of the honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan).

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Thanks to the investment made under the previous provincial government—PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction for the new Portage regional health facility is well under way. The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of an MRI machine.

(2) An MRI machine is a non-invasive medical imaging technique that uses a magnetic field and a computer-generated radio waves to create detailed images of organs and tissues in the human body. It is used for disease detection, diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

(3) Portage la Prairie is centrally located and is on No. 1 Highway in the Southern Health/Santé Sud Health Authority. Currently, there is only one MRI machine in the RHA.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

(4) An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden on stretcher services and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

(5) Located around Portage la Prairie are the Dakota Tipi, Dakota Plains, Sandy Bay and Long Plains First Nations. Indigenous people in Canada disproportionately face barriers in access to services and medical care. An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will bring care closer to their home communities and provide greater access to diagnostic testing.

(6) Located in the close proximity to the new Portage regional health facility is the Southport airport. The aerodrome has a runway length that is more than adequate to support medical air ambulance services. This would provide the opportunity to transport patients by air from more remote communities to access MRI imaging services.

(7) The average wait times for Manitobans to receive an MRI scan is currently six to eight months. Having an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility will help reduce these wait times for patients and provide better care sooner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support the investment and placement of an MRI machine in the Portage la Prairie regional health facility in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

* (14:30)

This is signed by Wayne Reed, Carol Fast, Merna Arksey and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

Provincial Trunk Highway 34

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The Provincial Trunk Highway 34, PTH 34, is a two-lane provincial primary highway that runs from the US border where it meets with ND 20 to PTH 16 at the town of Gladstone.

(2) PTH 34 runs north-south in the south-central region of the province. It is the main highway for the

towns of Crystal City, Pilot Mound and Holland, serving as a main corridor for semi-trailers, farm equipment, daily drivers and local school bus routes.

(3) A new bridge is currently being constructed over the Assiniboine River at PTH 34, north of Holland, in the RM of Victoria. The bridge serves as an important north-south link over the Assiniboine River between the Trans-Canada Highway and PTH 2.

(4) The deterioration of PTH 34 has raised major concerns due to its narrow shoulders and numerous deep potholes that pose serious safety risks considering farmers often need to use the highway to transport heavy equipment.

(5) Construction of a new bridge in accordance current design codes and the RTAC standard, located on PTH 34 crossing the Assiniboine River, will support trade and commerce and improve public safety in the area, and also accommodate flood events on the Assiniboine River.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to address the conditions of Provincial Trunk Highway 34, making the necessary upgrades to RTAC standard and to resurface the road once the new bridge has been completed.

This petition has been signed by Herb Seaver, John Thiessen, Angela Lloyd and many, many, many more Manitobans.

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Today I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) 'Suicidity' is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the age of 10 and 19.

(3) There have been reports of unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

(4) Legal and medical experts are deeply concerned that permitting Canadians suffering from depression and other mental illnesses to access

euthanasia would undermine suicide prevention efforts and risk normalizing suicide as a solution for those suffering from mental illness.

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

(6) Manitobans consider it a priority to ensure the adequate supports are in place for mental health of all Canadians.

(7) Vulnerable Manitobans must be given suicide prevention counselling instead of suicide assistance.

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports, instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition.

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

Honourable Speaker, this petition was signed by many, many Manitobans.

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The federal government has mandated a consumption-based carbon tax, with the stated goal of financially pressuring Canadians to make decisions to reduce their carbon emissions.

(2) Manitoba Hydro estimates that, even with a high-efficiency furnace, the carbon tax is costing the average family over \$200 annually, even more for those with older furnaces.

(3) Home heating in Manitoba is not a choice or a decision for Manitobans to make; it is a necessity of life, with an average of almost 200 days below 0°C annually.

(4) The federal government has selectively removed the carbon tax off of home heating oil in the Atlantic provinces of Canada, but has indicated they have no intention to provide the same relief to Manitobans heating their homes.

(5) Manitoba Hydro indicates that natural gas heating is one of the most affordable options available to Manitobans, and it can be cost prohibitive for households—[interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

I'll just remind all members that, as riveting as petitions are, it's important that we hear them, and particularly for those people having conversations close to an open mic, it's difficult for Hansard. So if you are having conversations, you are welcome to take them to the loges or outside the Chamber.

Mr. Guenter: (5) Manitoba Hydro indicates that natural gas heating is one of the most affordable options available to Manitobans, and it can be cost prohibitive for households to replace their heating source.

(6) Premiers across Canada, including in the Atlantic provinces that benefit from this decision, have collectively sent a letter to the federal government calling on it to extend the carbon tax exemption to all forms of home heating with the exception of Manitoba.

* (14:40)

(7) Manitoba is one of the only provincial jurisdictions to have not agreed with the stance that all Canadians' home heating bills should be exempt from the carbon tax.

(8) Provincial leadership in other jurisdictions have already committed to removing the federal carbon tax from home heating bills.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove the federal carbon tax on home heating bills for all Manitobans to provide them with much-needed relief.

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Breast Screening

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Due to evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society is now urging all provinces and territories to lower the starting age for breast cancer screening to 40.

(2) Based off 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at age 40 will save the Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

(3) After non-'melanona' skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

(4) Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of survival and less severe—in less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who don't receive the screening.

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast screening cancer screening age or announced their intention to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into their public health-care systems.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast screening age.

(7) Lowering the breast screening—cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system because cancers that are caught early are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast screening cancer screening capacity and lower the breast screening—breast cancer screening age to 40.

This petition has been signed by Laura Manskyr [phonetic], Trish Gros, Theresa Bergen and many, many other concerned Manitobans.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for—

Just a reminder to all members reading out petitions that when you are complete and finished your reading of the petition, saying that many, many Manitobans is an appropriate way to end the petition and not elaborating further on that.

So, the honourable member for Spruce Woods, the floor is yours.

Teaching Certification

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): I will endeavour to remember that when I get to the end.

I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subjects they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering well-rounded learning experiences for all Manitobans—Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments by the Province of Manitoba to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation under The Education Administration Act have significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for teacher certification.

(3) These amendments eliminated all subject-area requirements for teacher certification, including major and minor teachable subjects and subject-specific requirements for early and middle years streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed: senior years credit requirements in an approved major and—teachable major and minor; early and middle years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; and early and middle years credit requirements for specific subjects, including: math; physical or biological science; English or French; and history and/or geography.

(5) Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary educators outside the faculties of education and business partners were not consulted about the changes.

(6) The removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without sufficient training in core academic areas, thereby compromising the education that Manitoba students receive.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teacher certification and to reinstate teachable majors and minors and early and middle years requirements which are essential for ensuring teachers have strong knowledge in core subject areas; and

* (14:50)

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous subject-area standards, which are critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Deputy Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subjects they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering well-rounded learning experiences for all Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments by the Province of Manitoba to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation under The Education Administration Act have significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for teacher certification.

(3) These amendments eliminated all subject-area requirements for teacher certification, including major and minor teachable subjects and subject-specific requirements for early/middle years streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed: senior years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; early-to-middle years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; and early-to-middle years credit requirements for specific subjects, including: math; physical or biological science; English or French; and history and/or geography.

(5) Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary educators outside the facilities of education and business partners were not consulted about the changes.

(6) The removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without sufficient training in core academic areas, thereby compromising the education that Manitoba students receive.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teacher certification and to reinstate teachable majors and minors and early/middle years requirements which are essential for ensuring teachers have strong knowledge in core subject areas.

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous subject-area standards, which are critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

And this petition has been signed by Andrea Wiebe, Blair Jamieson and many, many Manitobans.

Green Valley School Expansion

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The residents of La Vérendrye and other areas around Manitoba are extremely frustrated and concerned by the provincial government's decision to cancel the school expansion project for Green Valley School in Grunthal.

(2) In 2021, the PC provincial government committed funding to expand Green Valley School for a new gymnasium and classrooms.

(3) The school is so crowded that three mobile classrooms were added to alleviate overcrowding in classrooms.

(4) In order for construction to begin, the school removed all three portable classrooms, leaving Green Valley in a further critical state of overcrowding.

(5) As a result of overcrowding, parents are choosing to home-school their children due to safety concerns and the challenges associated with overcrowding.

(6) The current Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning have said they are committed to investing in education.

(7) The concerns of residents of La Vérendrye and the surrounding area are being ignored by the provincial government.

(8) The lack of space in the school is affecting the quality of education and extracurricular activities for the students.

(9) The minister and Premier have a duty to respond to the educational needs of children and youth identified by rural communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to immediately bring back the three portable classrooms to help alleviate the stress and overcrowding classrooms.

* (15:00)

(2) To urge the provincial government to reinstate the expansion project for Green Valley School.

This petition has been signed by Henry Bergen, Cecil Bayliss [*phonetic*], Jesse Bergen [*phonetic*] and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

Breast Screening

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): Honourable Deputy Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Due to the evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society, CCS, is now urging all provinces and territories to lower the starting age of breast screening to age 40.

(2) Based off the 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at age 40 will have safe—will save the Canadian health-care system over \$460 million annually.

(3) After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

(4) Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of

survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who don't receive screening.

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast cancer screening age or announced their intentions to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into their public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age.

(7) Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to health-care system because cancers that are caught earlier are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to 'crecrease' breast cancer screening capacity and lower the breast cancer screening to age 40.

This is signed by many Manitobans.

Phoenix School

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Phoenix School, a kindergarten-to-grade-5 school located in Headingley, has experienced consistent enrolment growth over the last several years. Enrolment is expected to reach 275 students in the next two years.

(2) Because the school is now over capacity, the school division has had to install portable classrooms on site as of fall 2024.

(3) For several consecutive years, the top capital priority of the St. James-Assiniboia School Division has been the renovation and expansion of Phoenix School.

(4) In 2022, the Phoenix School expansion and renovation project was approved to proceed to the design phase. The project included, among other amenities, a new gymnasium, two new classrooms, a multi-purpose room and room for 74 child-care spaces.

(5) In June 2024, the school division received notice from the provincial government that the project has been deferred. There is no guarantee if, or when, the project will move forward.

(6) There are currently hundreds of children on a wait list for child care in Headingley. The daycare operator in Phoenix School has been told that they will continue to have space within the school for the 2024-2025 school year only, that further expansion of child-care space within the school is not possible and that space may be reduced moving forward due to the shortage of classrooms. If new space is not constructed as planned, many families may be left without child care.

(7) It is critical that the expansion and renovation of Phoenix School proceed as planned in order to support the needs of students, teachers and families in the growing community of Headingley.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to proceed with the planned renovation and expansion of Phoenix School without further delay.

And this petition is signed by Colleen Turney, Emma Filion, Lindsay Chartrand and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

Teaching Certification

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subjects that they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering well-rounded learning experiences for all Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments by the Province of Manitoba to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation under The Education Administration Act have significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for teacher certification.

(3) These amendments eliminated all subject-area requirements for teacher certification, including major and minor teachable subjects and subject-specific requirements for early/middle year streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed: senior years credit requirements as an approved teachable major and minor; early/middle years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; and early/middle years credit requirements for specific subjects, including: math; physical or biological science; English or French; and history and/or geography.

* (15:10)

Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary educators outside the faculties of education and business partners were not consulted about the changes.

(6) The removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without sufficient training in core academic areas, thereby compromising the education that Manitoba students receive.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teacher Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teacher certification and to reinstate teachable majors and minors and early/middle years requirements, which are essential for ensuring teachers have strong knowledge in core subject areas.

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous subject-area standards, which are critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

This petition was signed by Rut Zlatopolsky, Danica Berzendi and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subjects they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering well-rounded learning experiences for all Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments by the Province of Manitoba to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation under The Education Administration

Act has significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for teacher certification.

(3) These amendments eliminated all subject-area requirements for teacher certification, including major and minor teachable subjects and subject-specific requirements for early-to-middle years streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed: senior years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; early-to-middle years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; and early-to-middle years credit requirements for specific subjects, including: math; physical or biological science; English or French; and history and/or geography.

(5) Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary educators outside the faculties of education and business partners were not consulted about the changes.

(6) The removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without sufficient training in core academic areas, thereby compromising the education that Manitoba students receive.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teacher certification and to reinstate teachable majors and minors and early-to-middle years requirements, which are essential for ensuring teachers have strong knowledge in core subject areas.

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous subject-area standards, which are critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition has been signed by many, many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Breast Screening

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker—

An Honourable Member: Stand up.

Mr. Perchotte: I am.

I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Due to evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society is now urging all provinces and territories to lower the starting age for breast screening to 40.

(2) Based off 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at age 40 will save the Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

(3) After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. That is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

(4) Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who do not receive screening.

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast cancer screening age, or announced their intentions to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into their public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age.

* (15:20)

The Speaker in the Chair

(7) Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system because cancers that are caught earlier are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast cancer screening capacity and lower the breast cancer screening age to 40.

This petition has been signed by Nicole Elias, Bredard [*phonetic*] Klassen, Patricia Monk and many other Manitobans.

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Beginning March 17, 2024, persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) Suicidality is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the age of 10 and 19.

(3) There have been reports of the unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

(4) Legal and medical experts are deeply concerned that permitting Canadians suffering from depression and other mental illnesses to access euthanasia would undermine suicide prevention efforts and risk normalizing suicide as a solution for those suffering from mental illness.

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

(6) Manitobans consider it a priority to ensure that adequate supports are in place for the mental health of all Canadians.

(7) Vulnerable Manitobans must be given suicide prevention counselling instead of suicide assistance.

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports, instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition.

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling

with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

This is signed by Madeleine Golis, Monique Delay, Marc Bruyere and many, many other Manitobans.

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The federal government has mandated a consumption-based carbon tax, with the stated goal of financially pressuring Canadians to make decisions to reduce their carbon emissions.

(2) Manitoba Hydro estimates that, even with a high-efficiency furnace, the carbon tax is costing the average family over \$200 annually, even more for those with older furnaces.

(3) Home heating in Manitoba is not a choice or a decision for Manitobans to make; it is a necessity of life, with an average of almost 200 days below 0°C annually.

(4) The federal government has selectively removed the carbon tax off of home heating oil in the Atlantic provinces of Canada, but has indicated that they have no intention to provide the same relief to Manitobans heating their homes.

(5) Manitoba Hydro indicates that natural gas heating is one of the most affordable options available to Manitobans, and it can be cost prohibitive for households to replace their heating source.

(6) Premiers across Canada, including in the Atlantic provinces that benefit from this decision, have collectively sent a letter to the federal government, calling on it to extend the carbon tax exemption to all forms of home heating, with the exception of Manitoba.

(7) Manitoba is one of the only provincial jurisdictions to have not agreed with the stance that all Canadians' home heating bills should be exempt from the carbon tax.

(8) Provincial leadership in other jurisdictions have already committed to removing the federal carbon tax from home heating bills.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove the federal carbon tax on home heating bills for all Manitobans to provide them much-needed relief.

This petition has been signed by Tannis Recksiedler, Marlene Cyncora and Bev Macaulay [*phonetic*] and many, many, many more Manitobans.

* (15:30)

Breast Screening

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Due to evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society, or CCS, is now urging all provinces and territories to lower the starting age for breast screening at age 40.

(2) Based off the 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at age 40 will save the Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

(3) After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

(4) Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who don't receive screening.

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast cancer screening age, or announced their intention to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening and programs and hiring additional technologists into their public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age.

(7) Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to our health-care system because the cancers that are caught earlier are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast cancer screening capacity and lower the breast cancer screening age to 40.

This petition is signed Susan Crowe, Yvonne Smith, Lillian Hystray [*phonetic*] and many, many more Manitobans.

Provincial Road 275

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. Have to get these glasses on, thank you.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road 275, PR 275, known as Ditch Road, intersects with—excuse me—PR 588 serving rural areas west of the town of Swan River, and is a heavily used travel corridor linking Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The highway curves on entry into the town of Swan River and terminates at PTH 10A, the town's north bypass.

(2) The Swan River Valley is a highly productive agricultural area, and PR 275 is used by farmers to move heavy machinery and equipment as well as transport seed, grain and fertilizer to many farmers located within reach of the highway.

(3) It is also frequented by families, people shopping at businesses along the route and school buses to transport rural students into the town of Swan River for school.

(4) Due to only having patchwork and minor repairs, the highway has 'deteriated' and is covered with large potholes, posing a significant threat to vehicles and passengers.

(5) The roadway and shoulders on PR 275 are extremely narrow, leaving large ditches that have not been properly cared for, which has caused poor drainage. The town of Swan River and the municipality of Swan Valley West have enquired with MTI for a drainage solution over the past several years. This ditch is not graded properly and is full of bulrush, willows and cattails.

(6) The solution brought forward is to decrease maximum speed limits on the road and to undertake a full rehabilitation of the highway and to re-route the stream through what is now existing farmland, under

CN rail lines and PTH 10A bypass, as well as through several hundred metres of an existing slough into the Swan River.

(7) Numerous meetings held with Swan Valley West and town of Swan River with the provincial government have not moved forward. It was agreed in 2022 that MTI was to complete a hydraulic investigation of the capacity of PR 275/2nd Avenue ditch. The municipalities have not seen the results of this investigation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

* (15:40)

To urge the provincial government to address the much-needed rehabilitation of Provincial Road 275 to ensure public safety.

To urge the provincial government to provide the results of MTI investigation to the town and municipality, and provide immediate funding for the repair of PR 275; and

(3) To urge the provincial government to address drainage issues on PR 275 and create permanent solutions so that flooding can be avoided.

This has been signed by Jason Sakal, Jeremy Frampton, Doug Marzolf and many, many other Manitobans.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): We are interrupting Throne Speech debate today.

Could you please call the ethics report motion, followed by calling the government motion on the Special Committee on Local Journalism motion and followed by calling second reading of Bill 2, The Provincial Court Amendment Act.

The Speaker: It's been announced that the Throne Speech debate is interrupted so that we can then proceed to the ethics report motion, followed by the all-party committee motion, followed by debate on second reading of The Provincial Court Amendment Act.

ETHICS REPORT MOTIONS

The Speaker: At this point, then, we'll move on to the debate on the consideration of reports from the Ethics Commissioner.

And before we begin debate of the ethics report on this motion in this House, I would like to remind members of the process for the consideration of these motions, as agreed to by the House on October 2, 2024.

1. An ethics report motion shall be considered as the first item of business under orders of the day, government business.
2. Debate on an ethics report motion shall be limited to one sitting day.
3. The House shall not adjourn until all members have had an opportunity to speak to the motion. When there are no further speakers in the debate, the Speaker shall put the question.
4. An ethics report motion cannot be amended.
5. The Speaker shall read the motion to the House to open the floor for debate.
6. The—during the debate on an ethics report motion, no member shall speak longer than 10 minutes.
7. All members may speak to the motion, in the following debate rotation: the member who is subject to the—of the complaint, or a member of their party; the complainant member, or a member of their party; a member of the subject's party; a member of the complainant's party; an independent member.

Further to that, before reading the motion to open debate, I will read into the record the recommendations contained in the report from the Ethics Commissioner regarding the honourable member for Riding Mountain, dated November 5, 2024.

So on page nine of the report, the Ethics Commissioner wrote:

For the reasons given above, it is my opinion that the member for Riding Mountain contravened the act by having an interest in a private corporation that had a contract with the government of Manitoba. He also contravened the act by failing to include the contract in his Disclosure Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Sources of Income.

However, I also conclude Mr. Nesbitt's—sorry—I also conclude that the member for Riding Mountain's contraventions were inadvertent and resulted from the

unique circumstances of the corporate structure of the Russell Inn group of companies. I therefore recommend that no penalty be imposed.

The motion before the House, then, is:

THAT the Legislative Assembly accept the report of the Ethics Commissioner, dated November 5, 2024, regarding the honourable member for Riding Mountain, and approve the recommendation contained therein.

The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Speaker, I want to share with the House today a column that I provided earlier this month for publication in the community newspapers that serve my constituency of Riding Mountain.

And the rest is a quote—or is the column, I guess. The saying in politics is that if you're explaining, you're losing. But in the interests of full transparency, I'm going to give it a try. I would like to explain to my constituents the result of an NDP complaint to the Ethics Commissioner that became public and was reported in the media on November 5 and 6.

On August 9, 2024, the NDP caucus chair alleged that I had contravened section 44(1) of The Conflict of Interest Act by having an interest in a private corporation with a contract with the government of Manitoba and for failing to disclose the contract.

On November 5, 2024, the Ethics Commissioner, Jeffrey Schnoor, ruled that I did indeed contravene the act by failing to include the contract in my disclosure statement of assets, liabilities and sources of income that MLAs have to file yearly, prior to the start of a new session of the Manitoba Legislature.

This is where I want to give my constituents a little background information. The contract in question was signed by the Russell Inns Ltd. and the government of Manitoba in December 2023 that allows provincial employees to use Russell Inns Ltd. for rooms at established rates.

Since being elected in 2016, I have declared each year my corporation's interest in the Russell Inns Ltd. Under the old conflict of interest legislation, contracts a company had signed with government did not have to be disclosed.

In May 2018, I sold my common and voting shares in the Russell Inns Ltd. to my business partner but continue to hold non-voting shares as security until all payments for the sale are completed in 2029. Since May 2018, I have not been an officer or director

and have had no involvement in daily business of the Russell Inn group of companies.

Fast-forward to October 2023, a new conflict of interest legislation took effect, requiring MLAs to disclose any contracts they or their companies may hold with the government of Manitoba. I filed my disclosure statement, as usual, saying there were no contracts.

Because I have no involvement with the Russell Inns Ltd. other than receiving yearly financial statements, I was unaware that any contract had been signed and therefore did not update my disclosure statement in December 2023 as I was required to do.

From the date the complaint was filed with the Ethics Commissioner, I accepted full responsibility for this oversight. Mr. Schnoor, who I have thanked for his work in investigating the complaint and understanding the unique situation I find myself in, had discussions with my former business partner and also with a lawyer at the legal firm that completed the sale transaction in 2018.

Mr. Schnoor accepted the facts as outlined above but ruled I did inadvertently contravene the act. The penalty options in the act include a reprimand, a fine not exceeding \$50,000, a suspension or that the member's seat be declared vacant. However, the Ethics Commissioner also has the power to recommend there be no penalty if he is of the opinion that a contravention occurred even though a member took all reasonable measures to prevent it or a contravention occurred that was trivial or that was committed through inadvertence or an error of judgment made in good faith.

Mr. Schnoor concluded that no penalty should be imposed as he determined the contravention occurred as a result of inadvertence. As well, under the act, the commissioner can provide an exemption for an MLA to hold an interest in a company that has a contract with the government of Manitoba, providing that the contract is unlikely to affect the exercise of the member's powers, duties and functions.

I asked for this exemption, and Mr. Schnoor granted the exemption on November 1.

I apologized to the Legislative Assembly and Manitobans at a media conference on Tuesday, November 5, taking full responsibility for my inadvertent non-disclosure.

With this column, I am apologizing to the residents of the Riding Mountain constituency, who I am proud to represent each and every day.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

* (15:50)

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): We want to begin, on this side of the House, by reiterating our NDP government respects the office of the Ethics Commissioner and the current work of Commissioner Jeffrey Schnoor.

It's good—after two reports since the last election, everyone can see that Commissioner Schnoor is doing a great job and certainly has the confidence of everyone in this House. In 2016, he became the province's Conflict of Interest Commissioner, now called the Ethics Commissioner, and has been reappointed to that role twice since, in 2019 and 2022, both under the PC former, failed government.

And the fact that he was appointed by an NDP administration and reappointed by a PC administration speaks to the fact that he's well respected across party lines and therefore is well suited for the work that he's currently doing.

So we want to thank Commissioner Schnoor, not only for this report discussed here today, but also for his storied career in advancing the administration of justice for almost 50 years in this province.

I, myself, actually had the opportunity to work with him when I was a special adviser on Indigenous women's issues, and I believe he was the DM for Justice at one point, I'm pretty sure, under former minister Andrew Swan. And, actually, I—let me just put it on the record there, former minister Andrew Swan, DM Jeffrey Schnoor and myself as special adviser were working on legislation that criminalized the purchase of sex. So I really do honour him for the work that he's been doing.

In respect of the motion and the report at hand today, folks will know that the MLA for Riding Mountain has been a member of this Legislature since 2016. He's also a businessman. In fact, in September 2019, his about page on the PC caucus website read that, and I quote—well, his name, but the MLA for Riding Mountain has owned and published newspapers in the Riding Mountain area for nearly 40 years. He also serves as president of The Russell Inn Hotel and Conference Centre, which owns a majority of the Asessippi ski hill and resort near Inglis. End quote.

But we also know in this Chamber that it's important to follow the rules, and, clearly, the Ethics Commissioner found that the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), in regard to his disclosures concerning The Russell Inn and hotel didn't follow the rules. But, of course, I think we all know that it—the commissioner also found that the member's failure to do so was inadvertent. And we appreciate the MLA for Riding Mountain, that he's apologized and has taken responsibility for his failure to do so, which I think everybody in the House can agree is a good thing.

So, on this side of the House, we, of course, accept the commissioner's findings. We thank the commissioner for his work and look forward to getting back to serving the good people of Manitoba, including the good people of Minnedosa, Rapid City, Rivers, Virden, Birtle and everyone else in Riding Mountain.

However, let me just say this. The matter before us is a serious matter and damning for members opposite. It's not because of the specific mistake in question. What makes this matter serious is that it exposes a hypocrisy by members opposite and a failure to treat this Chamber with the respect that it deserves.

To illustrate this hypocrisy, I want to read some quotes pulled from Hansard, made by members opposite about the very same type of issue that one of their members is faced with today. And I quote—and this is from the member for Riding Mountain—I quote: "The minister knows the rules because the Ethics Commissioner is incredibly thorough in educating members." End quote.

Again, by the member for Riding Mountain, and I quote: "There is no explaining this away. There is no dancing around the issue." End quote.

From the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Jackson)—he put on the record here, and I quote: And so how was this missed, because the finding was that it was inadvertent. So how this was inadvertently missed by the member is unclear. End quote.

These comments show the PCs consider accountability to be a partisan issue. In fact, the interim Leader of the Opposition called for our member to be removed from his role for the very same mistake. But of course, he didn't stick to his principles by removing the MLA for Riding Mountain for his role as PC caucus chair.

So their response to today's Ethics Commissioner's report shows the members opposite like to engage in

hypocrisy. The MLA for Riding Mountain said, and I quote: The minister knows the rules because the Ethics Commissioner is incredibly thorough in educating members. End quote.

And yet he himself made the exact same mistake. So either he didn't listen to the commissioner when he himself was being thoroughly educated on the rules, or he knew them and broke them anyways.

The difference between these two is hypocrisy. Our MLA for Keewatinook never lectured the MLA for Riding Mountain about how incredibly thorough the Ethics Commissioner was. And it speaks to the broader level of PC hypocrisy. The members opposite will campaign on respecting the rule of law; then, as soon as they trot, they lose, try to ram in through a mining project during the caretaker period in blatant disregard to our own democratic conventions.

They pretend to care about financial responsibility and then submit fraudulent invoices about car rentals from an intimacy coach, to the point where a PC Party employee had to write the party CEO, and I quote: Can you imagine if donors knew their funds were used to pay for this, and recording this transaction as a car rental would be falsifying the financial record. End quote.

Just yesterday at AMM, the interim Leader of the Opposition said that, and I quote: I have to say to all of you, we lost the election. They didn't win. End quote.

It's unclear where the evidence for that is, given our leader is the most popular premier many, many times in a row across the country. We didn't lose the election; we won it, handily.

But even if you take his statement as face value—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I'd just remind the member to keep her comments more focused on the motion before us. She's kind of strayed pretty far.

MLA Fontaine: But even—[interjection]

The Speaker: The honourable member for Red River North (Mr. Wharton), please refrain from further comment, and also refrain from further gestures to the Chair.

MLA Fontaine: So Honourable Speaker, we on this side of the House hope that this is a good learning experience for all members of the House. Disclose your business government contracts and don't be a hypocrite.

Miigwech.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): You know, I have to say there is a pretty big distinction between the two members and how they chose to tackle this issue before the House on the record.

And I have to say that the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), the first word that comes to mind when I listen to his comments is leadership, and followed very closely by accountability and humility, something that folks on that side of the aisle know very, very little about.

So we thank the honourable member for Riding Mountain for taking accountability for what has been now agreed to by all sides as an inadvertent mistake. He has shown true accountability and true leadership in doing that and, you know, he's a valued member of this team and this Legislative Assembly.

* (16:00)

We appreciate everything that he does on behalf of the great people of Riding Mountain constituency, as well as our Progressive Conservative caucus and team.

And so we just say thank you very much to the honourable member for Riding Mountain. And, you know, the minister over there tried to make the comparison to the same issue, sort of, that came up about the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie).

But there's a significant difference. Yes, the Ethics Commissioner found them both to be guilty of contravening the act, but inadvertently. However, the difference, which the member for Riding Mountain clearly outlined, and the minister chose to leave out of her comments, is that the member for Keewatinook is—was actually running his business when he knew there was a government contract with it.

He has actually actively involved in the day-to-day operations of his business. The member for Riding Mountain, as he very clearly outlined, has no role. While the—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Jackson: —Government House Leader's (MLA Fontaine) heckling me, she had her 10 minutes and now it's my turn.

The member for Riding Mountain clearly has had no role in the day-to-day operations of his business, and the people who do run that business made this contract with the government without informing him and with no knowledge being passed along to him of it. That is the true definition of inadvertent breach

because he was unaware of the situation that transpired between his former business and the government of the day.

So the minister said that it's unclear how we don't understand that they're the same. They're not the same. They're very different. And the member for Riding Mountain, by the way, every day since this has come forward, he has taken accountability. He's taken action to make amends. The member for Keewatinook promised he was going to sell his business after his findings of having breached the rules. Don't think that's been done.

So there's no follow-up, no follow-through on the behalf of this government, which brings me to the word hypocrisy, which was used by this minister. My goodness, if that is not the pot calling the kettle black, I don't know what is. Goodness me—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order, please.

The member sitting in the loge will please refrain from further comment.

Mr. Jackson: I appreciate it. Maybe the member for Point Douglas (Ms. Smith) wants to come and put some words on the record, I'm not sure.

But anyway, nonetheless, hypocrisy is the word that the Government House Leader chooses to use. Well, we're talking about a government with a person who sits directly behind her who was convicted of—or, proven to be in breach of the same rule, and actually I would argue was more guilty because he was running his own business at the time, unlike the member for Riding Mountain who has sold his shares and is just waiting to—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) will refrain from further comment.

Mr. Jackson: Not to mention, Honourable Speaker, and I regret to go to this point, but there are numerous other breaches of the law from members on that side of the aisle that stand as part of the public record. And you want to say that we have no respect for the law and how that process works? My goodness, that is hypocrisy. [interjection]

And now the member for Assiniboia (MLA Kennedy) is telling me to sit down. I won't. I will not sit down until I've used my time to thoroughly defend the excellent member for Riding Mountain and his unequivocal apology today. Absolutely. He deserves it. He deserves it, not the bashing coming from the

other side from people who are living in glass houses and throwing stones.

We have no time. We have no time for that. The members think it's a joke. They're laughing. We don't think it's a joke. The member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) has taken this very seriously. He's done the correct thing. He's done the right thing, the hard thing, and apologized repeatedly to this Assembly, to his constituents and to the people of Manitoba.

We've seen no apologies to the same extent from members on their side of the aisle for their breaches of the rules of this place and elsewhere. And so we thank the member for Riding Mountain for his unequivocal apology, taking accountability for his actions. We condemn the Government House Leader's (MLA Fontaine) comments about hypocrisy and suggest that she reflect on the members that sit all around her and the hypocrisy that they put on the record every single day.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: So the question before the House is that the Legislative Assembly accept the report of the Ethics Commissioner, dated November 5, 2024, regarding the honourable member for Riding Mountain and approve the recommendation contained therein.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Now, as previously agreed—the honourable Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): I'd like to reflect that it was unanimous, please.

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

The vote is accordingly recorded as unanimous.

GOVERNMENT MOTION

The Speaker: Now, as previously agreed, we will move on to the motion regarding all-party committees.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister for Labour and Immigration,

THAT a Special Committee on Local Journalism be created to make recommendations on exploring the future of local journalism, including rural and cultural media such as French, Filipino, Punjabi and Chinese language publications, with the mandate to consider matters of public support for journalism, and report its conclusion to the Assembly within 30 days of the start of fall sitting 2025; and

THAT the composition of the special committee be: (a) four members designated by the NDP caucus; and (b) two members designated by the PC caucus; and

THAT the special committee be authorized to decide how it will conduct its business, including deciding to hold meetings at times and places it considers advisable to receive briefs and hear presentations; and

THAT, except for—as otherwise provided in this motion, the special committee shall have the same status and powers and follow the same rules and procedures as a standing committee of the House, including the power to establish a subcommittee for the purposes of carrying out any part of the special committee's work; and

THAT after adoption by the House, this motion may be amended only by: (a) unanimous consent of the House; (b) passage of a subsequent motion of the House; or (c) written agreement of all House leaders if the House is not sitting.

Motion presented.

* (16:10)

The Speaker: The motion is in order.

The floor is open for debate.

MLA Fontaine: Local journalism is the lifeblood of communities in Manitoba. From The Minnedosa Tribune in Eastman to the Lac du Bonnet Clipper in Westman to The Pas times up north to The Winkler Morden Voice down south, so many Manitobans make use of their papers to learn about local events, advertise events or catch up on how their sports team have done this week

There are also newspapers that serve communities in Manitoba, like La Liberté, the Filipino Journal and The Jewish Post and News and the Ukrainian community. La Liberté was founded in 1913 and has helped inform and sustain the Franco-Manitoban community for over a century. The Filipino Journal was founded in 1987 by Rod and Rosalinda Carnivous [*phonetic*].

One recent event they promoted and covered is, and I quote, bridging generations, the migration story of Filipino youth in Manitoba, which described that the group hoped that this would-initiative will spark conversations in the community, giving the younger generations an opportunity to learn about the past and collaborate in protecting Philippine history, democracy and our future.

It's great that we have papers who can help support events like these, that keep newcomer and immigrant communities connected to their cultural identities and communities. Of course, we have several newspapers in the Indigenous community that have actually played a significant role in protest and in struggle and in solidarity of issues that we were facing for many, many years. That's actually where you would find a lot of discussion and policy from, you know, our different PTOs here in our national AFN, Assembly of First Nations, would put in the newspaper what was going on in the community. And that's how a lot of Indigenous people also get their information.

It's important to note that, you know, Manitoba community 'pappers' don't only report the news. In some cases, they actually break the news. For example, on November 22, 2017, The Jewish Post and News uncovered the PC government had cut security funding at the Simkin Centre, a Jewish seniors centre in Fort Whyte, and was credited for doing so by other media outlets like the Free Press.

Editor Bellan commented, and I quote: It certainly appears that the Simkin Centre has become an unwitting victim of the provincial government's order to all regional health authorities to eliminate their deficits. While one might understand the motivation, giving only two weeks' notice that funding for security is going to be 'eliminated', that seems extreme. End quote. That's what the editor of The Jewish Post and News said about the former failed PC government.

And these three publications are just obviously three examples of how local and community newspapers can find and report on news that other main street outlets might miss, covering other news that they do. Dozens of papers like this across the province have been there for us, and now it's time for Manitobans to come through for them.

That's why our government is setting up the Special Committee on Local Journalism to explore ways that we can support local journalism during challenging and shifting economic conditions.

Obviously, this was a commitment in our Throne Speech, and our Premier (Mr. Kinew) has made it, you know, his personal commitment as well that we do this work on behalf of journalism and really as a means of ensuring democracy in our province.

This committee will be mandated to make recommendations on how to best support local journalism, including rural and cultural media.

And to be clear, our province—our Premier has said we do not want this support to be politicized like we've seen it happen at the federal level. And that's why it's so important to get all parties, representatives from both the NDP and PC caucuses, involved so that we can come up together with non-partisan solutions to a non-partisan issue.

The need for this special committee was reinforced earlier this month when Connor McDowell from the Brandon Sun published an article documenting the challenges faced by several local papers in the Westman region. And it's worth reading just a few here today, just to give the public and certainly members in the House a sense of the issues that are—we're currently faced with.

The Russell Banner; Terrie Wellwood has been working for the Banner for more than three decades. But while there were six journalists when she began, she is now the only one left.

And I quote: So that's a tough thing, because you've got to work a lot of hours. When I started, the newspaper industry was good. You know, people had no choice but to advertise with paper. Advertising dollars have trickled out of newspapers and that means less money to pay staff which means that those who remain ending up—end up needing to work long hours to keep the paper going. You have to really, really understand the idea that the communities need newspapers. Small-town editors really have to love the communities that they represent and cover. That's the big thing, having that in your heart. End quote.

The Neepawa Banner & Press Ken Waddle [*phonetic*], is the former mayor of Neepawa and a prominent member of the PC Party of Manitoba—and I apologize if I've mispronounced his last name—who ran in their 2006 leadership contest. With his management, it's an example of how local news can still succeed in Manitoba. Circulation is growing, and him and his wife recently purchased the Virden Empire-Advance from a Vancouver-based corporation. But he and his wife Christine know that newspapers only last

when they have journalists and editors that care about them.

And I quote: Walking down the sidewalk, the 76-year-old Ken Waddell [*phonetic*] doesn't let—

An Honourable Member: Waddell.

MLA Fontaine: Waddell—thank you, I appreciate that.

Waddell, sorry, doesn't let a person pass without a greeting. His wife Christine says the newspaper must be in good hands before she'll leave, the same philosophy she had about her dairy farm in 1984: I told them that we were not going to walk away from our milk cows because they would suffer if we didn't milk them that night. And that's how I feel about our newspaper. The only way I can see not having this paper is to have someone who is local and passionate to take it over. That's the only well-way. End quote.

And there are also good comments in the Boissevain Recorder. And Ryan Nesbitt, who publishes The Minnedosa Tribune and—[*interjection*]*—oh*, is the son of the MLA for Riding Mountain. And we want to work with local—I didn't know that, so that's nice to know—we want to work with local outlets like Wellwood's and Waddell's and Nesbitt's to see how we can help them with their challenges and learn from their successes.

Bill 8—I think it's also important to note that we also have to acknowledge over time the members opposite, when they were in government, tried to make matters worse in particular with The Government Notices Modernization Act that they passed in 2018. And what that legislation did is took away the requirement for government to pay and post notices of developments in local papers.

And if it had been proclaimed, it would have been really devastating for local communities for two reasons. First, it would have meant that many Manitobans who read those papers would be less likely to see those government notices. And second, it would have meant that local papers lost out on critical revenue streams at a time when news was already transitioning more and more online and traditional local paper business models were struggling.

But let's not forget, I think it's fair to put on the record that while members opposite were fighting tooth and nail to deprive local papers of ad revenue and to deprive Manitobans of access to government bulletins in their local papers, it was our caucus that was standing up for local journalism.

* (16:20)

In fact, we delayed the bill to give these papers more time to prepare for the legislation. And one of the MLAs who spoke up in defence of local papers in bill debate was our now-Premier (Mr. Kinew), the MLA for Fort Rouge.

And it's worth quoting what he said then because it's a reminder of how consistent our caucus has been in our support of local journalism, and I quote: Again, we on this side of the House support a free press. In fact, we support the entirety of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. And it is fundamental to a free and open society. It's fundamental to the proper functioning of democracy that there is a free press.

And yet this move by the government to try and pull resources away from community newspapers, including the community newspapers owned by Winnipeg Free Press, which the premier has threatened to sue, is an affront to those basic democratic freedoms. We recognized this from the outset and we saw right through the premier's moves, and that's why we delayed this bill over the summer. End quote.

And to their credit, Conservatives came out against the bill as well, including the members' opposite former colleague Steven Fletcher, who they kicked out of their caucus.

And Steven Fletcher put on the record, and I quote: Madam Speaker, why do we publish these notices in the newspapers in the first place? Has that changed? Not fundamentally.

People read the newspapers. Community newspapers in many ways touch a market that doesn't exist in the national sense. It's local, and many of the decisions that the Province makes from ecological to financial to land use to all our issues that affect people in the area.

So why would the government—unless the government doesn't want people to know; they don't want there to be accountability; they don't want transparency; or maybe it's some sort of vendetta against the press. I know the government's been getting a lot of bad press, but welcome to western civilization.

But trying to shut down the press is not a reasonable goal. And to minimize the press is not reasonable, not even—and Madam Speaker, as the last Tory, I support freedom of the press and I support their ability to critic and criticize even when it's blatantly unfair because that's the price we have to pay to be in a democracy. Another investment is transparency. End quote.

I think that's a really good quote from the members' former colleague, Steven Fletcher.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So, again, this is not a left or right issue. It's a pro-democracy versus anti-democracy issue. It's a pro-community versus anti-community issue. And we're calling on all members of the House to come together to explore issues on how we can best support local journalism and uphold democracy ensure—and while ensuring that all voices and community affairs and events and opinions are upheld and showcased across our beautiful province.

Miigwech.

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): Le journalisme local est la force vitale des communautés du Manitoba.

De l'hebdomadaire Minnesota Tribune dans l'est du Manitoba au Lac du Bonnet Clipper dans l'ouest, The Pas Opasquia Times dans le nord au Winkler Morden Voice dans le sud, de nombreux Manitobains utilisent leurs journaux pour s'informer des événements locaux, annoncer des événements ou suivre les résultats de leurs équipes sportives chaque semaine.

Il existe exactement également des journaux qui 'déservent' – qui desservent, excusez-moi, des communautés du Manitoba comme La Liberté, The Filipino Journal, The Jewish Post & News et la communauté ukrainienne.

La Liberté a été fondée en 1913 et a contribué à informer et à soutenir la communauté franco-manitobaine pendant plus d'un siècle.

Le Filipino Journal a été fondé en 1987 par Rod et Rosalinda Cantiveros, et un événement récent qu'ils ont promu et couvert est Bridging Generations: The Migration Story of Filipino Youth in Manitoba, qui a été décrit comme un programme d'ateliers et de conférence axés sur l'histoire des Philippines, la migration et les expériences uniques des jeunes Philippines au Manitoba. Le programme se terminera par un projet artistique collaboratif pour commémorer la réunification de notre communauté à travers notre pagbabalik-tanaw, mot tagalog pour « regarder en arrière » ou « se remémorer ». Le groupe espère que cette initiative suscitera des conversations au sein de la communauté, offrant aux jeunes générations l'opportunité d'apprendre sur le passé et de collaborer à la préservation de l'histoire philippine, de la démocratie et de notre avenir.

C'est formidable que nous ayons des journaux capables de soutenir des événements comme celui-ci, qui permettent aux communautés immigrantes de rester connectées à leurs identités culturelles et à leurs communautés.

Mais bien sûr, les journaux communautaires du Manitoba ne se contentent pas de relater les nouvelles. Ils en révèlent. Par exemple, le 22 novembre 2017, The Jewish Post & News a révélé que le gouvernement des Conservateurs avait coupé les financements pour la sécurité du Simkin Centre, un centre pour personnes âgées juives à Fort Whyte, et a été salué pour cette découverte par d'autres médias, comme le Winnipeg Free Press.

L'éditeur, Bernie Bellan, a commenté : Il semble, en effet, que le Simkin Centre soit devenu une victime involontaire de l'ordre du gouvernement provincial, donnant pour instruction à toutes les autorités sanitaires régionales de réduire leurs déficits. Bien qu'on puisse comprendre – la motivation annoncée pour le financement de la sécurité allait être limité avec seulement deux semaines de préavis, cela semble excessif.

Et ces trois publications ne sont que quelques exemples de la manière dont les journaux locaux et communautaires peuvent trouver et rapporter des nouvelles que d'autres médias grand public pourraient manquer.

Au Neepawa Banner and Press, Ken Waddell est l'ancien maire de Neepawa et est un membre éminent du parti progressiste-conservateur du Manitoba qui a participé à leur concours du leadership en 2006, et sa gestion est un exemple de la façon dont l'actualité locale peut encore réussir au Manitoba. La circulation est en croissance, et lui et sa femme ont récemment acheté le Virden Empire-Advance d'une société basée à Vancouver.

Mais n'oublions pas que, pendant que les membres d'en face se battaient pour priver les journaux locaux de revenus publicitaires et priver les Manitobains d'accès aux bulletins gouvernementaux dans leurs journaux locaux, notre caucus défendait le journalisme local.

Mais malheureusement, de nombreux membres opposés ont dit non : Nous sommes tellement opposés aux journaux locaux et au journalisme local que nous allons voter pour le projet de loi 8, même contre les objections de nos collègues conservateurs. Et ainsi, le 8 novembre 2018, les députés suivants ont voté

pour aider à tuer le journalisme local : le député de Lac du Bonnet (M. Ewasko), le député d'Entre-les-Lacs-Gimli (M. Johnson), le député de Turtle Mountain (M. Piwniuk), le député de Springfield-Ritchot (M. Schuler), le député de Red River North (M. Wharton) et le député de Swan River (M. Wowchuk). Et bien sûr, Heather Stefanson.

Mais ces députés ont l'opportunité aujourd'hui de rectifier leur erreur de 2018 en soutenant cette motion et ce comité spécial. Parce que ce n'est pas une question de gauche ou de droite : c'est une question de pro-démocratie contre anti-démocratie; c'est une question de pro-communauté contre anti-communauté. Et nous appelons tous les membres de cette Chambre à se réunir pour exploiter – explorer – excuser – des solutions.

Merci, l'honorable Président.

Translation

Local journalism is the lifeblood of Manitoba communities.

From the weekly Minnesota Tribune in eastern Manitoba to the Lac du Bonnet Clipper in the west, The Pas Opasquia Times in the north to the Winkler Morden Voice in the south, many Manitobans use their newspapers to find out about local happenings, announce events or follow the results of their sports teams every week.

There are also newspapers that serve communities in Manitoba, such as La Liberté, The Filipino Journal, The Jewish Post & News and the Ukrainian community.

La Liberté was founded in 1913 and has helped inform and support the Franco-Manitoban community for more than a century.

The Filipino Journal was founded in 1987 by Rod and Rosalinda Cantiveros, and a recent event they have promoted and covered is Bridging Generations: The Migration Story of Filipino Youth in Manitoba, which has been described as a program of sit-in workshops and lectures focusing on Philippine history, migration and unique experiences of Filipino youth in the Philippines and Manitoba. The program will end with a collaborative art project to commemorate our community coming together for our pagbabalik-tanaw, Tagalog for looking back or reminiscing. The group hopes that this initiative will spark conversations in the community, giving the younger generations an opportunity to learn about the past and collaborate in protecting Philippine history, democracy and our future.

It is wonderful that we have newspapers able to support events like this, which allow immigrant

communities to stay connected to their cultural identities and communities.

Of course, Manitoba's community newspapers do not just report the news: they also reveal some of the news. For example, on November 22, 2017, The Jewish Post & News revealed that the Conservative government had cut security funding for the Simkin Centre, a Jewish seniors' centre in Fort Whyte, and it was praised for this discovery by other media outlets, such as the Winnipeg Free Press.

Editor Bernie Bellan commented: It appears, indeed, that the Simkin Centre has become an unwitting victim of the provincial government's order instructing all regional health authorities to reduce their deficits. While it is understandable that the announced impetus for safety funding was going to be limited with only two weeks' notice, this seems excessive.

And these three publications are just a few examples of how local and community newspapers can find and report news that other mainstream media might miss.

At the Neepawa Banner & Press, Ken Waddell is the former mayor of Neepawa and a prominent member of the Manitoba Progressive Conservative Party who participated in their leadership contest in 2006. His stewardship is an example of how local news can still succeed in Manitoba. Business is growing, and he and his wife recently bought the Virden Empire-Advance from a Vancouver-based company.

But let's not forget that, while members opposite were fighting to deprive local newspapers of advertising revenue and deprive Manitobans of access to government bulletins in their local papers, our caucus was defending local journalism.

Unfortunately, many opposite members said, no, we are so opposed to local newspapers and local journalism that we will vote for Bill 8, even over the objections of our Conservative colleagues. And so, on November 8, 2018, the following members voted to help kill local journalism: the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), the member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson), the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk), the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler), the member for Red River North (Mr. Wharton) and the member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk). And of course, Heather Stefanson.

Today, these members have an opportunity to rectify their 2018 mistake by supporting this motion and this special committee. Indeed, this is not a left or right issue: it is a pro-democracy versus anti-democracy issue; it is a pro-community versus anti-community

issue. We call on all members of this House to come together to exploit—explore, excuse me, solutions.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

* (16:30)

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): First of all, I want to put a few cautions that I have on the record with this motion that we have before us here today.

First of all, the lack of specifics in the mandate. It—the motion fails to articulate what, quote, exploring the future of local journalism, actually entails. So it provides no benchmarks for any success or clarity on any key deliverables at all.

Also, the motion does not explain what are the specific issues facing local journalism that need to be addressed. I think there's a little bit of a lack of direction in this motion. So is the intention of the committee to decide who needs funding and support and who doesn't, or is it going to be a blanket report: pick winners and losers?

So I also have questions about the composition of the committee. I think if we all read the paper or watch the news, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) himself made comments that this committee would include government, opposition and potentially independent MLAs. I think the resolution clearly states, and I'll read out of the resolution: So let the composition of the Special Committee be (a) four members designated by the NDP caucus; and (b) two members designated by the PC caucus.

So either this House leader is not reading the news or ignoring direction from the Premier, but it should be a non-partisan committee and have voices from all corners of our province. Also, allocating four members to the NDP caucus and only two to the PC caucus skews the committee heavily along those partisan lines. The absence of independent members' voices is concerning as both Tyndall Park and Fort Garry have communities that would be impacted by decisions of this committee. This oversight undermines the diversity and perspectives, particularly in the matter that affects all regions and demographics.

So I also want to just put on the record: What does the Premier mean when he says potentially? I guess he just means no, because, like I quoted in the media: Potential independent MLAs. There are no independent MLAs that are going to be assigned to this committee, according to an unamended motion.

Also, there's no sunset clause for this committee. So, therefore, even if it moved forward as is with four

members designated by the NDP caucus and two by the PC caucus—so with no sunset clause built into it and ensuring the conclusion of the committee after the report is done, technically, in my opinion, the committee would remain intact. And after the election in 2026, maybe early 2027, the NDP would technically still hold the power of this apparent non-partisan committee. So, you know, it may be, you know, four members designated from government caucus and two members designated by the opposition caucus might be a better wording in the resolution.

So there's also an overreliance on procedural flexibility. Allowing the committee to self-determine its procedures opens the door for inconsistent practices. The motion provides no requirement for public consultation or transparency in decision making, which could result in closed-door sessions that leave key stakeholders out of the conversation.

So it does say that it has powers of the special committee, but it doesn't ensure that the public is consulted anywhere in this resolution. And by the public, I also mean the people who this is affecting in the journalism world.

Does this motion have unrealistic timelines? It is—and I'll read from the motion again—that will report its conclusion to the Assembly within 30 days of the start of the fall sitting in 2025. So a 30-day reporting window, is that sufficient if you're going to require a thorough examination of challenges in our local journalism?

So such a short timeline discourages deep engagement with industry experts, stakeholders, and that includes public input. I don't know if the timelines are there, especially across—through the Christmas break, a lot of people are less interested in participating in committees, spending time with their families, so I think it's very important that we look deeply into a 30-day reporting window and see if that is sufficient for the challenges that we face here today.

And, again, if we don't do that, it may very well discourage engagement with—not just the journalists themselves, but also people that are affected in the community. Those short timelines kind of raise suspicions that there is a predetermined outcome prior to a committee having the fulsome time to actually investigate deeply, and also engage with the public.

I know the government on this side of the House is—takes great pride in all the consultations that it has done over the years. I know members opposite are proud of lowering the 45-day consultation period

to 30 and squeezing off that public input that is so important, but us on this side of the House, we support public engagement.

Also the motion has an overly narrow scope in cultural representation. So again, while this motion includes—is inclusive of French, Filipino, Punjabi and Chinese publications, that's commendable. But what the—you don't see in the motion, it overlooks other important ethnic, linguistic, cultural and even religious communities. So, Indigenous, Black, Arabic, LGBTQ. Also there's media outlets that aren't—there are outlet—media outlets that are being overlooked.

The minister quoted from The Jewish Post, but yet didn't even mention that right here in this resolution there was that opportunity—and, you know, maybe the minister is diligently writing down an amendment which, you know, we would consider as a friendly amendment and try and make this motion right here today.

But this selective approach fails to recognize the diversity of voices that contribute to local journalism and could alienate communities left out of the mandate that is specifically mentioned right here in this motion on today's Order Paper.

* (16:40)

So obviously, near and dear to my heart, I have one newspaper of importance to my constituency, is the Lögberg-Heimskringla, which is the oldest—and I know I spoke of this the other day here in my private member's statement—but it is the oldest continually published ethnic newspaper in North America.

That's missed out of this motion here today. While its mandate and guiding principles and audience would bring it within the committee but for its inadvertent—thank you very much—I don't know if any of these were intentionally left out of this motion or if it was inadvertent but obviously this motion was just written on the back of a napkin.

Other potential excluded groups are those that don't align along linguistic, ethnic or cultural lines. One group that sting—strings—'spings' to mind is the seniors; their community interest affects Manitoba regardless of their language or culture. Manitoba Lifestyles 55 plus is just one example of a community interest publication that would absolutely benefit from the recommendations of this committee, but completely left out; completely left out of this motion.

So this motion needs to have, I think, substantial amendment to it. I guess the gist of the motion is there,

but the actual substance is not. And I think of this day where our words matter—the words matter in this motion that's before us here today. And I think it's very, very important that we get it right, including the conclusion of the—on the conclusion of today's business here.

This motion also creates risk to editorial independence. That's something that we can't underestimate here. Public support for journalism must be handled delicately to avoid perceptions or realities of government influence over editorial decisions. So this committee, at no point, can make recommendations that would influence reporting. The motion does not specify safeguards to ensure that public funding mechanisms won't compromise the independence of local media.

This process fails to include journalism stakeholders in the process. That is very important as well. If we're going to make decisions that affect papers and journalists, it is very, very important that we include them in the process. This motion as written here before us today does not accommodate any of that.

So the motion makes no mention of how the committee will incorporate input from journalists, editors, publishers, media associations and also unions. Those are the ones that'll be most directly affected by the work of the committee. So excluding these voices has its risks, and that—those risks are creating recommendations that are disconnected from the realities of the journalism industry.

So the motion also missed the opportunity to examine broader media ecosystem issues. The focus on local journalism is important but quite narrow. The committee could use this opportunity to examine some issues such as the role of large broadcasters in supporting local journalism.

The effects of corporate media consolidation on local news—I think we all probably know a small paper that has been bought up or has disappeared in a matter of time throughout our rural communities. Maybe it's not recognized as much by, you know, the members that reside inside the city of Winnipeg, but I'm sure you—we all remember the Tribune back in the day, that is no longer with us.

The role of misinformation and trust in media is part of the local journalism crisis as well.

So, again, I just want to mention that there is no sunset clause in this. It specifically calls on four members of the NDP caucus rather than government caucus. So if there's no sunset clause, then after the

next election when the NDP is back in opposition, that means that they would still have four members on this board and only two PC caucus members.

So while the intent behind this motion is commendable, its current design lacks the clarity, inclusivity or strategic focus needed to address the urgent crisis in our local journalism. A restructured approach, one that ensures broader representation, clear deliverables, adequate resources—that's one thing: there's no resources dedicated in this motion as well—and also a meaningful stakeholder engagement.

And, again, our government has been very proud of all the engagement that we have done over the years while we were in government. This government has taken the time to bring legislation in front of this House to reduce the period that EngageMB is required. It was 45 days under this government—under this PC government, and now it's shrunk to 30 days under the NDP government.

So you have to have stakeholder engagement and listen to them. And again, that—as mentioning earlier as the timeline, whether the 30 days would be effective enough, especially if there are subcommittees that are struck. If the subcommittees are struck partway through, they would still be bound by that 30-day period and may not conclude properly, especially with engaging with stakeholders.

So all of these makes it essential to achieve meaningful results; otherwise, this initiative just risks becoming a missed opportunity. The government has a record of silencing Manitobans and refusing to allow them to come to committee. I think we've seen that with the BITSA bill: just adding five specific bills and different schedules on the back of that BITSA bill. This motion here today I feel has similar effects where the timelines aren't long enough to have meaningful stakeholder engagement. And that's not just from the journalists; that's also from the communities.

Now, if there's something that came up where a new ethnic group wanted to get a paper off the ground partway through, it's not listed in here either, obviously, so I think the naming has to be a lot more generic rather than just picking out, you know, French, Filipino, Punjabi and Chinese languages. I think it has to be more inclusive. And I realize we're inclusive on this side of the House but, obviously, being—trying to be very divisive on the other side of the House.

* (16:50)

So, therefore, I move, seconded by the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk),

THAT the first clause of the motion be deleted and the following substituted as the new first clause:

THAT a Special Committee on Local Journalism be created to make recommendations on exploring the future of local journalism, including rural and cultural media representing all ethnicities and non-official languages, so long as they do not promote hate speech or undermine the Manitoba values of inclusivity and respect for all races, religions and backgrounds, with the mandate to consider matters of public support for journalism, and report its conclusion to the Assembly within 30 days of the start of fall sitting, 2025; and

Motion presented.

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment is in order.

The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): I have an opportunity to bring a few words on—about the amendment that my colleague from Gimli-Interlake has brought forward—Interlake-Gimli. So I'll make sure that I get that right, but used the same two words anyway.

But yes, I know the member also from saint—Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) had indicated too about this motion that was brought forward here, and mentioning a lot of newspapers in rural Manitoba. And when it comes to, you know, rural Manitoba, I'm a proponent for, when it comes to journalism, the importance of getting the story out, especially when it comes to our rural areas throughout the province, including the city of Winnipeg, the North, First Nations communities.

I think it's very important that with the amendment that we put forward here, they include—an inclusionness of when it comes to journalism, it's so important that all Manitobans are heard when it comes to this motion and the amendment that we have put forward here.

It's important that, in small towns, in towns that I represent in Turtle Mountain, the town that I live in, there's a lot of diversity that was starting to happen and which, nice to see. You know, I brought my wife to Virден back over 30 years ago, and I remember, there was actually two other Black families that lived in Virден at the time. And she came and—with me, and we raised our family in the town of Virден.

And over—since then, we've seen other ethnic groups coming in when it comes to business owners from Korea, business owners that are Punjabi. They're coming into the communities, all our communities. And one of the fastest growing populations in Virden or in Killarney are the populations of Filipinos.

They are contributing so much to our society, our rural areas. And of course, we're seeing that all throughout Manitoba. Our Filipino population is growing tremendously. I remember going to—the importance of making sure that they're inclusive when it comes to the communications, when it comes to our journalism in the Killarney area.

This past summer, I know the Minister of Immigration and Labour was also out to Killarney at the same—around the same time. We—I think we missed each other by a few minutes there. But it was a Filipino celebration of—in turtle—Killarney-Turtle Mountain. And there was over three to four hundred Filipinos, and there was probably a couple hundred residents from the whole area. A total of about 500 people were in that community hall, celebrating the diversity of the—celebration of the Filipinos in Killarney.

And it's so important that we also include—we have a number of First Nations in western Manitoba that also need to make sure that they are—when it comes to journalism, their stories are told in the area so that everybody—all these small towns, they do have local—within the small towns.

There are small communities within regions of, like, Boissevain, Killarney—they—well, there is—like, Ninga is a small town just south, between the two towns of Killarney and Boissevain. It's so important right now that they actually have a little page inside one of the newspapers to talk about their community and the people that live in that small community.

So it's so important that journalism in our small communities are still able to produce stories—to produce news for individuals.

And I think it's—at the same time, they have to make sure that the stories are done right, making sure that there's a perspective on both sides of the story, to make sure that reporters get—take their information and not just make one-sided; having perspectives so that people have the right information that newspapers can actually deliver and tell the story and making sure that, hey, you know, when it comes to tendering of, let's say, highway contracts—these newspapers actually have a lot of advertisement in them, and they actually

have tenders—notice that other—sometimes the provincial government puts in there or the—some local businesses have put tenders in. And also when it—and local governments.

And right now, in a region like, let's say, for instance, Boissevain and Killarney, there will be a number of municipalities that actually represent that region, so it's important that when Killarney—there's a tender that's going to be in Prairie Lakes, it's advertised in the small papers of the Killarney newspaper.

And, again, I believe that at one point in Turtle Mountain, we had about six or seven newspapers, and now they're starting to be bought up by bigger players and amalgamations. And so it's important that, again, those stories do get told within—even though it's more regional papers that are starting to establish themselves here with the amalgamation, we've got to make sure that every community has a voice, every small community has an opportunity to share that information, share that story.

And like I said, our communities are getting so much more diversified with the population changing so much, and it's so great to see.

It's so important that if there is a group like, let's say, the Punjabi, who are coming more into the Brandon area and establishing businesses and really contributing to the economy there, it's important that their—they have a paper that when other members of their community come to live there or move there—choose to move to Brandon, they have, at first, a paper that actually has a Punjabi language so that as you're learning the English language, they can transition into getting the news from the local—the papers that are established in Brandon, Manitoba.

And so it's quite important that we do, you know, amend this and making sure that, you know, when we do have this committee—the special committee that was on—the motion is about, that there's representation and that there's a 30-day waiting—days from the start of this fall sitting, that there is this committee that gets—and shows that there's inclusionness and—when it comes to race, religion, background and the mandate to consider the matters of public support for journalism.

So it's important that this amendment gets put into—because right now, the motion that was actually brought forward by the member from St. Johns doesn't actually fully state that there should be more

to that motion; that it's more inclusive and the opportunity to actually express ourselves.

And I'm glad I had the opportunity to put a few words on—

* (17:00)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 23 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 27, 2024

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